DOLORES CLAIBORNE

screenplay by

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based on the novel by

Stephen King

THIRD DRAFT
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OPEN ON

A HOUSE. A large, impressive summer home. Real wealth. But the paint's peeling. The roof needs work. A faded, tarnished quality that's more than just out of season.

CUT TO

STAIRS. Steep, majestic, bare wood. A grand old house. We're looking up, but it's an odd angle, we can't quite see the top. SOUNDS coming now -- two people struggling -- something metal CRASHING against wood -- and then, a moment later, our curiosity dispelled by --

A VOICE (OS)
(an old woman's scream)
-- Dolores, no! -- Leave me be! --
Leave me! -- Duh-lorrr-isssss--

SUDDENLY INTO FRAME

VERA DONOVAN, 75, hurtling toward us -- a tumble of pink flesh and nightgown -- mid-air -- falling -- a brutal, glancing header on the stairs -- her body jerked by the impact -- spinning now -- a horrible sort of cartwheel -- bone on wood -- head -- hip -- shoulder -- and then, as fast as it started, it's over.

ON THE LANDING

VERA'S BODY sprawled there. Legs twisted beneath her. Her neck at an angle it hurts just to look at. Blood already pooling on the hardwood floor. And then -- the body moves -- tries to anyway -- a palsied, halting effort, and --

AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS

A WOMAN stands beside a fallen wheelchair. Staring down in shock. Trying just to breathe. Her housedress torn, hair tangled. She is fifty-five years old and looks every day of it. She is DOLORES CLAIBORNE.

VERA'S VOICE (OS)
(a whisper from below)
Dolores...

DOLORES hesitates. Frozen there. God knows what she's thinking. And then, suddenly she's in motion -- rushing down the stairs and --

CUT TO

A KITCHEN DRAWER whipping open -- pulled so violently that it flies off it's housing -- KNIVES and CLEAVERS CLATTERING across the floor -- a TEA KETTLE SCREAMING on the stove --

WIDER TO FIND

DOLORES, panicked, staring down at the KNIVES at her feet. Eyes scanning wildly around the room -- looking for <u>something</u> -- What? -- A CAST IRON POT on the back of the stove -- she grabs for it -- her arm grazing THE TEA KETTLE -- <u>burned</u> -- recoiling -- the kettle falls -- hot water spilling -- she jumps back -- no time to think -- something -- <u>anything</u> -- and there it is -- A LARGE MARBLE ROLLING PIN and --

CUT TO

THE LANDING. Vera's body as we left it. Motionless now.

DOLORES standing over her. Wielding the ROLLING PIN. Raising it over her head. Poised to strike, when --

A VOICE (OS)
(out of nowhere)
<u>Dolores Claiborne</u>!

BEHIND HER

SAMMY MARCHANT, the postman, coming fast through the room.

SAMMY
What the hell're -- my God --
(he sees the blood)
-- <u>What've you done</u>? --
(mailbag falling as
he rushes toward her)
-- <u>put it down, Dolores</u>! -- you hear me? -- just put it down!

DOLORES lowers the rolling pin. SAMMY pushing past her.

SAMMY
-- Jesus, Dolores...
(stopping cold)
My God...omigod...

He's seen the body. He turns to DOLORES. He backs away.

SAMMY
...you killed her.

CLOSE UP -- THE ROLLING PIN slipping from her hand and --

CLOSE-UP -- THE ROLLING PIN hitting the floor. Rolling across the landing and out of sight. The sound of it CLATTERING DOWN THE STAIRS as we --

CUT TO

NEW YORK CITY -- THE SIXTH AVENUE CANYON in your face. Looking uptown -- thirty blocks to the park and --

FORTY-EIGHTH ST. VENDORS packing the sidewalk. Suits and Secretaries -- lunch on the fly, and --

FIFTY-THIRD ST. CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ripping up concrete. Oblivious to the TRAFFIC and a STEEL DRUM BAND banging away for quarters, and --

FINALLY TO

FIFTY-SIXTH ST. But now we're high above. Looking down. Forty stories up at least. Quiet suddenly. Until --

WOMAN (OS)
Cuts?

PETER, 40, fashionably casual, enters THE FRAME. And now we realize we're looking through a window. His window.

PETER
Just the description of the campaign plane. Annie's got a great picture.

WIDER TO FIND

PETER'S OFFICE. Manhattan media. Framed magazine covers on one wall. If it's not Vanity Fair it's damn close.

WOMAN (OS)
And that's it?

PETER
I said I liked it four times already.

SELENA ST. GEORGE standing there. Early thirties. A great haircut but she chews her nails. She wears Donna Karan but doesn't take care of it. She stabs out a cigarette.

SELENA
What happened to, "wonderful?"

PETER
It's <u>wonderful</u>.

SELENA
So I get the Murdoch piece?

PETER
C'mon, Selena. You're six months ahead of your contract.

SELENA
I'm on a roll. Use me.

PETER
This is not a roll, it's a crusade. Hit a beach. Eat something solid. Take a breath for crissake.

SELENA
I want this piece. I've already prepped it. I deserve it.

PETER
Wait a minute...

SELENA
<u>There's a book here goddamit</u>.
(trying to soften)
C'mon Peter...I need this one.

PETER
I've got a dozen writers to keep happy, Selena. You know that.

He smiles. An appeal. She's not buying it.

SELENA
Great. So now you're not only not fucking me anymore, you're not giving me the good assignments.

His smile folds. A SECRETARY appears in the doorway.

PETER
What is it, Ellen?

SECRETARY
(a paper in hand)
There's a fax for Selena...

SELENA
The travel agent?

SECRETARY
No, it's a clipping from the Bangor Daily News.

They've got no clue --

SECRETARY
(reading it)
"Socialite Dead, Housekeeper Held For Questioning. Mrs. Vera Donovan, of Little Tall Island, Maine--"
(stopping as--)

SELENA rips the page from her.

SELENA
Where's the cover sheet?
(scanning it)
Who sent this?

SECRETARY
This is all we got -- that's--
(hearing something behind her)
Maybe it's coming through now --

PETER staring as SELENA pushes through the doorway.

PETER
What story is this?

SELENA already gone. PETER looks to the SECRETARY who gives him a "damned if I know" look.

CUT TO

A FAX MACHINE. A page just coming through. No name, no number, no details. Large, handwritten letters:

ISN'T THIS YOUR MOTHER?

REVERSE TO FIND

AN OUTER OFFICE. SELENA ripping the fax from the machine. Balling it quickly in her hand. Tossing it sharply into the garbage as she heads back away --

PETER
(in the doorway)
What's going on?

SELENA
Nothing.
(brushing past him)
Just some crank. It's nothing.

CUT TO

SELENA'S OFFICE. Smaller than Peter's. Cluttered. The day after deadline. SELENA circling her desk. Gathering things into her large black bag as she whips off instructions to HER SECRETARY.

SELENA
Download my Murdoch files and tell Research I want everything they can get their hands on --

PETER
(in the doorway)
-- Selena? --

SELENA
-- anything that's not going to make it here by Saturday should be in L.A. when I get there Sunday.

HER SECRETARY scribbling away as PETER moves into the room. He holds the crumpled FAXES, smoothing them in his hand.

PETER
Selena.

SELENA
What?

PETER
What are you doing?

SELENA
(zipping her bag)
I'm prepping a major cover story.

PETER
This woman -- the housekeeper -- the one they're holding...

SELENA turns sharply. PETER with the faxes.

SELENA
I don't believe you.
(flaring)
You're going through my garbage?

SECRETARY
(backing from the room)
I'll just start on these calls...

SELENA
(hand out)
Could I please have my mail back.

PETER
Selena...this is this morning's paper. A woman was murdered...

SELENA
Can I have them back please?

PETER hesitates. No mistaking her tone. Watching her take them from him. Watching her head for the door.

SELENA
(her parting salvo)
You owe me the Murdoch.

PETER left there. Alone. Confused.

CUT TO

AN EMPTY GLASS. A BARTENDER'S HAND INTO FRAME delivering a FRESH DRINK -- vodka with a lemon wedge.

A MIDTOWN BAR. Business lunch rush. SELENA at the rail. MANHATTAN TRAFFIC through a window in the BG.

BARTENDER
How about a menu, Selena?

SELENA
I doubt it.

PETER (OS)
Club soda please.

PETER slides in beside her. She doesn't turn.

SELENA
I accept your apology.

PETER
You told me your mother was dead.

SELENA
You told me you were leaving your wife.

PETER
It is your mother, isn't it?
(beat)
I can't believe you told me your mother was dead.

Now she turns. Hardly intimidated.

SELENA
You want to talk about the piece? I'm here. You want a personality profile? I'm really not up to it.

PETER
Okay. The piece. It's only taken me the better part of a year to pull this thing together. It's a major, major story.

SELENA
You talked me into it.

PETER
Look, on your game, you're the best writer I've got.

SELENA
What is that supposed to mean?

PETER
I'm worried about you.
(she rolls her eyes)
Selena...you and I...everything that's happened -- I hardly think it's out of line for me to be concerned about you.

SELENA
Am I getting the damn piece or not?

PETER
I can't -- let me finish -- I don't pretend to know what's going on here, I don't want to pry, but this is obviously something that--

SELENA
What do you want me to do?
(incredulous)
Go hold her hand?

PETER not sure what he wants. The BARTENDER delivers his club soda. SELENA involved with a cigarette.

PETER
Look, nobody has to be in L.A. until next week. Right now, you say it's fine -- it's not a problem.
(intimate here)
I'm just worried that two days from now -- five days -- next week -- this is gonna sink in, that's all. I can't afford to have this fuck up because it's not the best you.

PETER warming her up. He's there for her.

PETER
I mean, let's just make sure this is what you think it is. Doesn't that make sense?

SELENA
What are you saying? If I don't go see my mommy I can't have the piece?

Silence his answer. She'll get no response, as we --

CUT TO

AERIAL VIEW -- A FERRY BOAT. We're in Maine. A cold day in March. An old, slow car-ferry chugging through whitecaps toward LITTLE TALL ISLAND.

CUT TO

MOVING POV -- THE TOWN OF LITTLE TALL approaching. The one village on the island. A small, working class summer town bunkered down for the winter. Fishing boats. A ferry slip.

SELENA on deck. Alone. Smoking.

CUT TO

THE LITTLE TALL PIER. The FERRY tied in. DOCKWORKERS unloading. SELENA'S RENTAL CAR pulling off the slip.

CUT TO

THE RENTAL CAR on Main Street. Stopped at a red light.

INSIDE THE CAR

SELENA at the wheel. She's tight. Spacing out, as she takes in the surroundings. Her eyes wander to the sidewalk.

HER POV

A WOMAN of forty standing on the corner. Staring at her. A look of curious recognition.

BACK TO

SELENA turning away sharply. A van behind her HONKING its horn. She hits the gas. The car jumping away and --

CUT TO

AN OLD MUNICIPAL BUILDING. A pokey, all-purpose facility at the center of town. A sign above the door:

LITTLE TALL ISLAND TOWN HALL

CUT TO

INSIDE THE TOWN HALL. Whatever charm this building once had has been renovated out of it over the years. The kind of place that holds everything from Bingo to the local zoning board hearings. Quiet at the moment.

DETECTIVE JOHN MACKEY on the phone in a temporary office just off the lobby. He's fifty. A big presence tightly wound into a small package. Always a suit and tie. A bad leg. A cane he'll never get used to.

MACKEY
(on the phone)
...so he keeps the lab open, that's what they get paid for...

His eyes settle on something outside the room --

CUT TO

THE LOBBY OF THE TOWN HALL. SELENA standing there alone. Unnoticed by a SECRETARY typing behind a counter.

MACKEY (OS)
Can I help you?

SELENA turns. MACKEY behind her.

SELENA
I'm looking for Dolores Claiborne.

MACKEY
And you are?

SELENA
I'm her daughter.

MACKEY hesitates. Turns to the SECRETARY --

MACKEY
Could you please call up for Frank? Ask him to come right out.

SELENA
Is she here? I tried to call from the airport -- your phone lines -- it's been impossible.

MACKEY
We've had a busy day.

SELENA
Well, is she here or not?

MACKEY
The constable will be right down.
(he tries a smile, not his best weapon)
I'm Detective Mackey, Maine State Police.

SELENA too tight to press it. She'll wait.

SELENA
Can I smoke?

MACKEY
It'll be our secret.

She roots in her bag a moment. She'll find a cigarette but no lighter. His eyes never leave her.

MACKEY
It's Selena, right?
(she looks up)
We've met before, Miss St. George. You may not remember me -- you were about twelve...
(he pulls a lighter, strikes it for her)
What year was that? The eclipse? Must've been what? Seventy-five?

SELENA pulls back. Off balance now.

MACKEY
I was the investigator.
(beat)
When your father died. We met at the hearing.

No time to react as -- CONSTABLE FRANK STAMSHAW enters. He's forty. In uniform. The only cop on the island. A simple lawman.

FRANK
What's up, John?

MACKEY
Miss St. George is here...

FRANK
Selena?

SELENA staring. Who is this?

FRANK
Frank Stanshaw...
(offering his hand)
Marshall's brother? Jonesport High?

SELENA
Right. Sure.
(faking it)
Of course.

FRANK
Been a while, I guess.

SELENA
Quite a while. Yes.

FRANK
Be honest, I'm kinda surprised to see you. Your mom's been pretty firm about us not trying to contact you.
(to Mackey)
I didn't know she'd made any calls.

SELENA
She didn't call. I saw the Bangor paper. It was faxed to my office.

MACKEY
And where is that?

SELENA
I came up from New York.
(enough of this)
Look, is she here or not?

FRANK
She's right upstairs.

SELENA
Is she under arrest?

FRANK
Technically no. Detective Mackey came over last night, so we're just getting started.

SELENA
Started on what?

MACKEY
We've scheduled an inquest for Monday morning at nine-thirty. We'll take the weekend to try and sort things out.

SELENA
But you kept her overnight.

MACKEY
Your mother, Miss St. George, is refusing to cooperate at this point. We had her spend the night -- we thought she might want to talk to us but apparently that is not the case. We've advised her to get an attorney. She has declined.

SELENA
What are we into here?

FRANK
Well, that's what we're trying to get a handle on. Vera Donovan is dead. There was an autopsy this morning in Machias. She died from a fall, that much we know.

MACKEY
Your mother was the only person with Mrs. Donovan at the time.

SELENA
That was her job, wasn't it?

MACKEY
I'm afraid, Miss St. George, there's a little more to this than what you may have read in the paper.

Off SELENA'S reaction we --

CUT TO

FRANK STAMSHAW'S OFFICE. Cluttered and homey. DOLORES, alone, in the corner, straightening up a pile of newspapers. The door opens behind her.

FRANK
Dolores?
(seeing her working)
Dolores, what're you doing?

DOLORES
(still at it)
Straightin up this friggin mess is what I'm doing. Gorry, but this place is a dump.

FRANK
Jesus, Dolores, you're a suspect not a maid -- just leave that be now -- there's someone to see you.

She half-glances back. SELENA in the doorway.

DOLORES
I told you, I don't want no lawyer.

FRANK
It's your daughter, Dolores.

A beat. DOLORES seriously thrown.

SELENA
Mother?

DOLORES
Selena?
(beat)
My God...lookit you -- you cut your hair -- I didn't...
(stunned, she turns to Frank--)
You call her? -- That what you did? Jeezly-crow but you got some nerve.

FRANK
She's here on her own, Dolores.

DOLORES hesitates. Joy stronger than anger for the moment.

DOLORES
Lookit you -- Selena -- I'm just...
(crossing to her)
My God...is it really you?

SELENA
It's me mother.

DOLORES gathers SELENA in her arms, holding her tightly. SELENA allows this -- frozen at first -- finally joining the embrace because it's more awkward not to. DOLORES pulls back to find FRANK and MACKEY watching from the doorway.

DOLORES
Well, I guess you two've had your stunt for the day.

DOLORES drawing herself up. Trying to settle.

DOLORES
You can wipe off that smile, Frank. You may be a hot-shot town cop these days, but it hasn't been too long since I seen you runnin around in a saggy diaper with that same foolish grin on your face.

FRANK
Dolores, please -- we did not call your daughter.

DOLORES
(re: Mackey)
'N your pal there -- I c'n read you easier'n an underwear ad in the Sears catalogue.

SELENA
Mother.
(Dolores turns)
Why don't you get your bag?

CUT TO

TOWN HALL PARKING LOT. SELENA unlocking her rental car. DOLORES waiting. FRANK and MACKEY standing there.

FRANK
I know you've been living at the Donovan house, Dolores, but it's a crime scene now, so I'm afraid it's off-limits for the time being.

DOLORES opens her door. Ignoring him.

FRANK
(to Selena)
We'd prefer your mother remain on the Island the next four days. If there's some pressing reason to go t'mainland you give us a call. You need a place to stay, I'm sure--

DOLORES
I got my own house and you know it.
(turning back)
And if I decide to make my grand escape to South America I'll make sure t'let you know first.

FRANK
I'd appreciate it.

DOLORES
That it then? Or're you planning on followin us home?

MACKEY
One last thing, Mrs. St. George--

DOLORES
My name is Claiborne.
(right on him)
I changed it back after Joe died n you know it. Dolores Claiborne.

MACKEY
I'm very sorry, Ms. Claiborne. I'm sorry, but I really think'd be for the best if you found yourself some legal representation.

DOLORES
So you're sorry, are you?
(getting in the car)
I'll bet the last time you were sorry was when you needed to use the pay-toilet and the string on your pet dime broke.

She SLAMS the door. SELENA left standing there.

FRANK
You better talk to her, Selena.

SELENA stares around. She looks trapped.

SELENA
The motel's still open, right?

FRANK
Not till May. It's off season.

SELENA
What about the Inn in Jonesport?

FRANK
Devereux's? No...burned down must be four years ago.
(pause)
We're kind of releasing her in your care here.

SELENA nods. Too claustrophobic to even say good-bye. FRANK and MACKEY watching her get into the car, as we --

CUT TO

THE RENTAL CAR on the road. Rough island countryside.

CUT TO

INSIDE THE CAR. SELENA driving. DOLORES staring at her. Awkward silence, until --

DOLORES
I'm just muzzy here tryin to think what to say.
(beat)
All grown up -- lookin so...
(beaming)
You turned out a beautiful woman, Selena.
(overcome)
I just can't believe you're here.

SELENA
That makes two of us.

A cold pause. DOLORES sensing the chill.

SELENA
I'm sure there's a very good reason for why you'd go out of your way to antagonize them like that.
(pause)
There is a good reason, isn't there?

DOLORES
Sometimes bein a bitch is all a woman has to hold onto.

SELENA looks over. Then back to the road.

DOLORES
It's a nice car.

SELENA
It's a rental.

DOLORES
You pay by the day or by the week?

SELENA
I assume that's your way of asking how long I'm staying.

DOLORES
Gorry, you're more nervous than I am.

SELENA
I've got to be in Los Angeles Monday. It's a big story. I'm trying to get out of it, but it may not be possible.

DOLORES
You want -- up here -- to get to the house --
(the road)
-- you're gonna miss the turn.

SELENA flustered. Locking the brakes.

DOLORES
Just swing around -- just...

The car pulls a wide, jerky turn. SELENA a lousy driver.

DOLORES
I guess you don't remember the way.

SELENA
It's only been fifteen years.

A pause. DOLORES turns away. Eyes to the road.

DOLORES
I didn't kill her.
(beat)
I didn't push her down that friggin staircase. That's what you want to know, ain't it? 'N I'm tellin you -- I did not murder that bitch any more n' I'm wearin a diamond tiara right now.
(silence)
What'd they tell you 'fore you came up to get me?

SELENA
They said you refused to talk to them. They said they kept you overnight because they were worried you might hurt yourself.

DOLORES
Frank Stamshaw, gorry ain't he dumb. "Hurt myself."
(amused by this)
I spent more'n enough Sunday mornins watching that boy in church, his finger so far up his nose it was a miracle he could get it out without callin for help.

SELENA
How smart does he have to be, mother? He's got an eyewitness who puts you standing over a dead body with a rolling pin.

Now DOLORES goes quiet. Not much air left in here.

DOLORES
I always knew Vera Donovan'd just be about the death of me -- knew it the first time I saw her. Goddam old bitch has really stuck her gum in my gears this time.

SELENA reaching for a cigarette. Fumbling for it. She's getting edgier by the moment --

DOLORES
I'm scarin you, ain't I?

SELENA
Look, I'm not the one in trouble.

DOLORES
I did not kill Vera Donovan.

SELENA
Then there's nothing to worry about, is there?

DOLORES
Not that she's not better off dead.

SELENA
There's a great defense strategy...

DOLORES
She's been bad for so long.

SELENA
Okay.
(snapping)
Look, I just spent four days on deadline. I don't expect you to have the slightest idea what that's like, but I'm...I'd just...
(trying to settle)
I'm just a little stressed, okay?
(beat)
All right?

DOLORES nods. SELENA driving in silence, as we --

CUT TO

A HOUSE. Dolores's house. We're at the East end of the island; the most barren, hardscrabble real estate on Little Tall. A perpetual, hard salt wind off the North Atlantic. There's nothing extra out this way; trees, weeds, even rocks don't make it without being strong. A punished and colorless landscape.

The town road runs along the water. The coastline nothing but rock. Woodsmoke from a few nearby houses. A pitted, dirt driveway leaves the road, rising slightly a hundred yards or so up a small crest. At the top of this crest is a four acre parcel of land surrounded by scrub-meadow and brambles. The driveway fizzles out at the center of a dirt yard. There's a tool shed and a roofless, tilting garage. The property is littered with forty years worth of debris: a useless old pick-up truck, rusted steel drums, tires, etc.

The house itself is basically a two-story, gray wooden shack. Weatherbeaten shingles of various design evidence additions and half-assed attempts at remodeling over the years. There is a front porch. Paint peels from the window trim. Nobody has lived here in quite some time.

IN THE DRIVEWAY

DOLORES and SELENA outside the car. Staring at the house.

DOLORES
Spooky, ain't it?
(silence)
Can't stand out here all day.

DOLORES looks over. SELENA, arms crossed, trying to take it all in. Fifteen years is a long time.

CUT TO

A BROKEN WINDOW. Vandalized. The CAMERA MOVING along now the side of the house to find GRAFFITI -- a crudely painted skull and crossbones.

FINALLY TO

DOLORES ON THE FRONT PORCH. At the door. Fiddling with keys. SELENA behind her, a pocket book and a large black leather bag slung over her shoulder.

DOLORES
Friggin little bastards --
(trouble with the lock)
I got'n idea who they are too.

SELENA
(impatient)
Here. Let me try.

DOLORES hands SELENA the keys. Steps back. Turns around to look off the porch and --

HER POV

THE YARD. The field beyond it. The ocean beyond that. Barren, gray, foul weather that suddenly changes, as we --

MATCH CUT INTO

FLASHBACK

We're looking down off the porch. The same spot, but now the fog, the cold, and nineteen years have just disappeared. It is the Summer of 1975. It is hot and clear. The garage is standing. The pick-up truck very much alive.

THIRTY MEN are coming toward the house from the far distance. They are in formation. A search party, moving slowly, struggling solemnly through the meadow and brambles beyond the property.

A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD GIRL steps off the porch. Watching the men. Tensely, quietly, edging forward.

DOLORES, age 36, stands above her on the porch. She doesn't see the girl moving away because her eyes are locked on the search party in the distance. The quiet broken suddenly by --

A SEARCHER'S VOICE (OS)
Hey, Sheriff! Over here! Over here!

DOLORES
Selena!

THE TWELVE YEAR OLD GIRL turns back. Frightened.

DOLORES
Get in the house. Right now.

OUT OF FLASHBACK AND

BACK TO -- THE PRESENT

SELENA
(confused, at the door)
I am in the house.

DOLORES turns back. Shaken and trying to hide it.

CUT TO

INSIDE THE HOUSE. Front door opens to the living room. Beyond that a dining room. Off that, the kitchen. One first-floor bedroom. Two more upstairs. A museum-like quality: threadbare furniture, dust, wind breezing through the broken window -- a fully furnished house that no one's lived in for a decade.

SELENA in the living room. This about the last place on earth she wants to be. Struggling with that, as --

DOLORES
(busying around)
It's cold, I know -- thank God I kept the electric up --
(turning on a lamp)
There's clean linens last I looked.
(opening shutters)
I got matches, we'll have hot water pretty quick.
(pulling a curtain)
I tried to sell two years ago, but ain't nobody with halfa wit wants a place out here...
(over her shoulder)
Longer you stand there, the more boogery it's gonna feel.

SELENA
It's dead.

DOLORES turns. SELENA holding the phone.

DOLORES
Gorry, it's off three years at least.

SELENA
(hanging up)
I guess I'd know that if I called more often.

DOLORES
You called Vera's last Christmas.
(another lamp)
You just forgot, that's all.

SELENA
The lines go both ways, mother.

DOLORES
Selena, please...

SELENA
You've always had my numbers.

DOLORES
All I said was you forgot.

SELENA
The bottom line is I need a phone.

DOLORES
We can go into town. Market closes at six on Thursdays.

SELENA
I'll go now.
(checks her watch)
I can just catch them at the office.

DOLORES
You don't know what we need.

SELENA
I'm assuming it's everything.

DOLORES
You'll want a hand.

SELENA
I'll be fine.

SELENA already pulling her keys. DOLORES nods. If she's hurt it doesn't show. Back to work. Just like always.

CUT TO

AN UPSTAIRS BEDROOM. Selena's old room. Frozen in it's girlish, high school decor. DOLORES has made up the bed. She is unpacking for Selena. Pulling carelessly rumpled garments from the large black bag and folding them into neat, perfect piles on the bed. DOLORES, just now finishing with the clothes, reaches deeper into the bag and --

A SERIES OF SHOTS -- the contents of Selena's bag as DOLORES places them on the dresser. A chaotic collection of stuff -- the personal detritus of Selena's life.

A LAPTOP COMPUTER -- much used and abused.

CIGARETTE PACKS -- a messy collection. Open packs. Empty packs. A variety of brands. Lighters. Matches.

HALF A DOZEN TRAFFIC TICKETS -- balled up and forgotten.

THREE SMALL TAPE RECORDERS -- journalist quality. Tangled headphone wires. Loose batteries. A few ruined cassettes. Half a dozen new, blank tapes.

A FLASK -- scuffed and well-traveled.

NOTEBOOKS -- disorganized to say the least. Pages hanging out. Balls of paper. Scribbled notes on cocktail napkins.

AND THEN...

PILLS -- lots of pills. A dozen prescriptions at least. Vial after vial. Old stuff. New stuff. Labels from different pharmacies. "NOT TO BE REFILLED" typed on more than a few of them. Quite an ugly little grab-bag.

THE CAMERA FINDS

DOLORES staring at this assortment of objects from Selena's bag. Clearly not the personal essentials of a healthy soul. DOLORES absorbing this. A piece of hope crushed quietly inside her. She grabs the bag. Sweeps the pills back where they came from. She sits on the bed. Wounded deeply. Turning toward the open door, as she hears --

A FIVE-YEAR-OLD-GIRL (OS)
(somewhere in the hallway)
...you count a hundred! -- you count -- no peeking! -- don't peek! --
(playfully continuing as she gets closer--)

DOLORES staring toward the door and --

FLASHBACK

The little girl. In the hallway. A gorgeous, happy five-year-old SELENA. A game of hide and seek. Giddy, as she searches for a place to hide.

And then, a voice from downstairs -- Dolores's voice -- a much younger Dolores -- the classic sing-song countdown -- "five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five..."

The little girl scrambles away down the hallway, out of sight and --

OUT OF FLASHBACK

As we were. DOLORES sitting on Selena's bed. Trying to catch her breath. Frozen there, as we --

CUT TO

A VIEW OF BLUE ROCK COVE. Dusk. A moment of this, before a PIECE OF PLYWOOD slides in, blocking the vista.

DOLORES alone in the LIVING ROOM. Boarding up one of the broken windows. BANGING IT into place -- BANGING with her hand, when suddenly, she turns --

DOLORES
There you are...

SELENA entering behind her with grocery bags. She's been drinking.

DOLORES
(rushing to help)
Here -- lemme --
(taking a bag)
I started to get worried...

SELENA
(struggling with the bags)
These calls -- it ended up longer than I thought.

DOLORES
You must be starvin.

SELENA loses one of the bags -- it falls --

SELENA
-- oh <u>shit</u> --

DOLORES
I got it. Not to worry...

DOLORES already on the case. Pulling paper towel from the bag she's carrying -- kneeling quickly to staunch the leak.

DOLORES
You go on. I'll take care of this.

SELENA
I asked her for double bags -- you would've thought I was speaking Swahili...

DOLORES
It's just the milk. There's 'nother whole quart here.
(no problem)
Go on. You go warm up.

SELENA turning away. Heading up the stairs. DOLORES cleaning the mess.

SELENA
There should be a fifth of Scotch in there. I wasn't sure you'd get the heater going.
(calling down as she disappears upstairs--)
I got some chops...there's pasta ...potatoes...

DOLORES hoisting the bags. Lugging them --

INTO

THE KITCHEN. Bags to the counter. DOLORES unpacking, reaches in and pulls out a BOTTLE OF SCOTCH -- Johnny Walker Red -- she puts it down instantly, as if it were on fire -- undone by its presence -- staring at it until --

SELENA (OS)
It's not like you, mother.

DOLORES turns. SELENA holding the black bag.

SELENA
Start a job, quit halfway. I mean, if you're gonna unpack for me, well, I expect you to do it <u>all</u>.
(she's pissed)
And frankly, mother, I don't remember asking you to go through my things.

DOLORES
I could see how tired you were.

SELENA
Well, it just so happens I've got a pill for that...

SELENA starts pulling out bottles. She <u>is</u> angry.

SELENA
Just so you don't feel you missed anything...
(first of a series)
This is Inderal. It's for panic attacks.
(next)
This is Seconal. It's for sleep. Sort of your all-purpose coma thing.
(next)
Here's my Halcion. You sleep, but you dream. My travel favorite.
(next)
Fioronal -- migraines.
(MORE)

SELENA (cont)
Tylenol with codeine...
(next)
Ahhh...Dexedrine. One for waking up.
Two for deadlines.
(next)
Here we go -- my Valium. Crucial.
Sort of the anchor of my stash.
(she'd go on, but--)

DOLORES
Stop.
(a heavy pause)
Would you rather potato, or the
noodles?

SELENA
(pure chill)
Surprise me.

SELENA walks. DOLORES watching her go.

CUT TO

FOOD ON A PLATE. SOUNDS of cutlery and --

DOLORES and SELENA at the DINNER TABLE. Two silent, alienated faces. SELENA a few fingers deep into the Scotch. Neither of them as hungry as they should be.

DOLORES
(finally)
Must be a lot of pressure. All them
famous people. Talkin to 'em.

SELENA
Please...

DOLORES
You were in the same room -- I
framed the picture -- you and
Richard Nixon.

SELENA
He was selling a book.

DOLORES
I saved all your articles. Drugstore
in Jonesport puts em aside for me. I
used to read them to Vera -- when she
was clear enough to listen.

SELENA uncomfortable with this.

DOLORES
I got a scrapbook -- it's up at Vera's. You'll see when we go over. All your articles and your cards too.

SELENA drains her drink. Looking for a cigarette.

DOLORES
You've done so well for yourself. I hate to think of everything this place must be for you -- all that gorny shit comin back on you.

SELENA
Is that what you think? How well I've done?

DOLORES
Hell, even Miss Vera Kiss-my-back-cheeks Donovan couldn't help but be impressed. The look on her face the day you had that first Picture-On-The-Cover story -- you woulda thought she'd passed a brick.

SELENA pouring another drink. She's not sober anymore.

DOLORES
Maybe you oughta slow down.

SELENA
Believe me, I know my limit.

DOLORES
That's what your father used to say. God, but he was a nasty drunk.

SELENA looks over. Some line just crossed.

DOLORES
I only said he was a nasty drunk.

SELENA
What did he have to be happy about?

DOLORES
I 'spose when you're born mean, and dumb, and hurtful as can be, what the hell's there to look forward to 'cept making everyone else as miserable as you are.

SELENA
(impulsively)
Is that why you killed him?

Dead air. Just an awful silence.

SELENA
Bad question, I guess. Occupational hazard.

DOLORES stands. Begins to quietly clear the table.

SELENA
(she is drunk)
Don't feel too bad, Mom. I asked Jean Harris the same thing once.

DOLORES moving away from the table and --

INTO

THE KITCHEN. DOLORES laying the dishes in the sink.

SELENA (OS)
But seriously, mother...
(calling in)
Did you kill him?

DOLORES takes the blow. She steadies herself against the counter, this her only concession to the moment.

AT THE TABLE

SELENA with a cigarette now. Nervously fiddling with a PORCELAIN CREAMER on the table as DOLORES returns.

SELENA
I'm sorry.

DOLORES silently clearing the table, when her eyes move past SELENA suddenly, toward the front door and --

DOLORES'S POV -- FLASHBACK

The front door will open. The bright haze of a summer sunset will blow out the landscape beyond. This light will come only through the door. The rest of the house -- still in the "present" -- will remain dark.

JOE ST. GEORGE will enter the house. He is thirty-five. A scrappy build. A bad haircut. He is coming home from work. He's thirsty and dirty. Standing in the doorway unlacing his boots.

(Note: Selena has no idea what her mother is seeing behind her. Dolores will continue to relate to Selena as if this were not happening, trying to ignore this "presence" as the scene progresses.)

SELENA
Look, let's face it, mother -- we barely know each other. We've hardly spoken in years. And that's as much your doing as mine.

JOE in stocking feet, banging the mud from his boots in the doorway.

SELENA
You didn't kill Vera? Great. You've got nothing to worry about. You did, then you deserve whatever comes. Just let's not pretend we're in some goddam Norman Rockwell family reunion.

DOLORES barely listening -- immobilized by Joe's presence.

SELENA
I'm sorry, mother. But that's where we are. As for Dad, the few memories I have, I'd like to keep.
(sensing distraction)
Are you listening to me?

DOLORES focuses. Forcing herself.

DOLORES
That creamer. In your hand. It was part of a set. From your grandmother. There was a pitcher went with it.

SELENA
What are you talking about?

JOE laying his boots on the porch.

SELENA
Mother...?

DOLORES
"What did he have to be happy about?" That's what you said, wasn't it?
(drifting)
Having a load on and someone to blame for his troubles was all Joe St. George needed for a good time...
(turning into VOICE OVER as we go into--)

<u>FULL FLASHBACK</u>

THE HOUSE. Suddenly full of light. The decor different. We are in the Summer of 1972. SELENA, hearing her father, rushes out from the kitchen. She is nine. A gorgeous child.

DOLORES (VO)
I was sposed to be thrilled to get him...
(pause)
He said he loved me n I believed it.

SELENA
We made tapioca!

JOE
Get out...

SELENA
We did. It's not instant either. And whipped cream too.

JOE
Next thing you'll tell me you made it just for me.

SELENA brightens suddenly. He's fooling.

JOE
There's that St. George smile...
(he kisses her)
Don't you look just like your grandmother.

SELENA gallops across the room. Out the door. Into the sun.

CUT TO

THE KITCHEN. DOLORES (age 33) making dinner. Humming to herself as JOE enters. She looks over, offers a smile.

JOE
(opening the refrigerator)
Soda's warm.

DOLORES
I only got home a half hour ago. It went in first thing.

JOE
It's hard enough drinkin this shit cold.

He pulls a pudding from the refrigerator.

DOLORES
Hello to you too.

JOE
Where's the paper?

DOLORES
Theo called about the chain winch.
(good news)
He'll go as high as fifty dollars.

JOE
I ain't selling.

DOLORES
It's not worth thirty. You said so yourself.
(no answer)
Ain't that the whole point a A.A.? Helping out your buddies?

JOE
You know, Dee, it's goddam miracle I can get through the day without you right there tellin me what to do.

DOLORES
(fuck it)
Suit yourself. Paper's on the sill. We'll eat about six, I guess.

JOE turns away. DOLORES starts laughing.

JOE
What's so fuckin funny?

DOLORES
(trying to stop)
Your pants -- they're split clear the way up....

JOE feels around. She's right.

JOE
You're pretty goddamn frisky all of a sudden, Dolores. Ever since you started working for Vera Donovan. What's the deal? You kiss that rich, summer ass all day long you got nothing left for me?
(she's still laughing)
Your father used scrape my old man's boat, so don't be gettin high n' mighty with me.

DOLORES
(not laughing now)
You still had the boat we wouldn't need the extra money.

JOE tightens instantly. DOLORES retreats to the stove.

A WOODBOX in the corner. JOE bending over it. Feeling back to the rip in his pants --

JOE
(amused himself)
I guess it is pretty fuckin funny though, ain't it?

DOLORES putting on the cabbage. Starting to giggle again.

DOLORES
Looks like you sat down i--

JOE swinging -- out of nowhere -- a chunk of rock maple in his hand -- hard into the small of her back and -- DOLORES groans -- so much sudden pain she can't get a sound out. Dropping against the stove. Barely catching herself there. Eyes wet already with how much it hurts.

JOE
Why the hell do you make me do it?

He tosses the log back into the box. Takes his paper and pudding and leaves the kitchen.

DOLORES just now starting to breathe. Hobbling toward a chair. Barely making it. Serious, serious pain.

CUT TO

A POT OF CABBAGE ON THE STOVE. Boiling over.

DOLORES still in the chair. Trying to rise to turn it down. But she can't. Too much pain.

In the BG, JOE in the LIVING ROOM, reading the paper as the TELEVISION runs the nightly news.

DOLORES
(even this hurts)
Selena! Selena, come in here!

She waits. SELENA enters. An empty pudding cup in hand.

SELENA
He ate one already...

DOLORES
I just want -- could you turn down the heat under the veg.

SELENA
Why don't you do it, Mommy?

DOLORES
I'm restin.

JOE
(from the next room)
That's right, she ran her mouth until she got tuckered out.
(he starts to laugh--)

DOLORES sitting there listening. Steeling over, as JOE'S LAUGHTER builds and builds, and we...

TIME CUT

A BEAUTY PAGEANT ON TV. Swimsuits in fuzzy black and white.

JOE on the couch. Watching in the dark.

IN THE KITCHEN

DOLORES scraping dinner dishes. Hobbling through it. Still suffering from the earlier blow. She drops A CUP -- it CRASHES to the floor.

JOE (OS)
(pissed)
Goddamit... That better not be one of my mother's dishes.

BACK TO

JOE on the couch. The BEAUTY PAGEANT on TV.

JOE
You oughta take at a look at this, Dee. You might want to see what an ass is s'posed to look like.
(pause)
Guys on the boat, always talking, everybody saying how ugly you are. You know what I do? I come right to your defense. I say, "Shit, she may be ugly now, but you should've seen her when I was drinking."

CUT TO

A PORCELAIN MILK PITCHER AND CREAMER. DOLORES'S HAND reaching in for the pitcher and --

CUT TO

JOE ogling the swimsuits on TV.

JOE
My mother warned me you were gonna let yourself go. Fat ass, lousy--

WHAM! -- out of nowhere -- the MILK PITCHER slamming against the side of his head -- shattering -- blood -- JOE recoiling in pain -- BELLOWING from the hurt and --

DOLORES standing there. Over him. Waiting a moment until the BELLOWING subsides into a groaning whine.

DOLORES
Guess what, Joe? I ain't feelin tired anymore.

JOE starts to stand -- stopping cold, as DOLORES pulls AN AXE from beneath her apron --

DOLORES
If you don't want this in your head, Joe, you better sit back down.

He hesitates. Crouched there, clutching his ear, blood and milk dripping down his face.

SELENA (OS)
Mommy?

SELENA, in pajamas, on the stairs. Peering into the dark.

DOLORES
(eyes on Joe)
You go on back to bed honey. Go on. Your father n I're havin a little discussion here.

SELENA
Is everything all right?

DOLORES
Ayuh. Isn't it, Joe?

JOE
Uh-huh. Right as rain.

Silence. And then the sound of SELENA climbing the stairs back to her room. Her door closing shut.

JOE
You broke my mother's pitcher. Oh, bitch, ain't you gonna get a payback.

DOLORES frozen there, still holding the axe. JOE pulls his hand away from his ear and there's blood all over him now.

DOLORES
I'll tell you this, Joe St. George: You can go on as long as you like sayin whatever hurtful things you need to say, but your days of hittin are over. You ever do it again, one of us is goin to the morgue.

JOE staring at her. And then she hands him the axe. Just like that. Hard to tell who's more surprised.

DOLORES
All I ask is that you do it quick and don't let Selena see the mess once it's over.

DOLORES closes her eyes. JOE holding the axe in his blood-covered hands. And he's really thinking about it. DOLORES standing there. Waiting, until --

JOE
(finally)
Make yourself useful, woman. Bring me a towel for my head -- I'm bleedin all over my goddam shirt.

DOLORES opens her eyes. JOE slipping the axe under the couch. The BEAUTY PAGEANT playing in the BG, as we come --

<u>OUT OF FLASHBACK AND</u>

A WASH RAG being dipped into soapy water.

DOLORES (55) at the kitchen sink. SELENA still at the table in the BG. We're back in the present.

DOLORES
That was one lesson he got the first time. Maybe the only one.

SELENA silent. Unnerved. Pushing out her cigarette.

DOLORES
You had a long day. You must be awful tired.

SELENA
What do you want me to say?
(derisively)
"Thanks for sharing?"

SELENA pushes away from the table. DOLORES quietly back to the dishes as SELENA heads upstairs.

CUT TO

THE EAST END COASTLINE. The next morning. Not far from the house. SELENA walking across the raw, tough landscape. Suddenly, she stops --

DOLORES down below. Alone on the rocks. Staring at the cold, wind-blown surf.

SELENA
Mother!

DOLORES turns to see SELENA climbing down toward her.

SELENA
I've been looking all over!
(as she comes)
My God, it's freezing -- What are you doing out here?

DOLORES
I just been thinkin.
(eyes to the water)
Just chewin things over.

SELENA finds a cigarette. She'll try to light it in the wind.

SELENA
I hope you've been thinking about making some plans.

DOLORES
I've got my Sociable Security. I can still work. I don't need much.

SELENA
Jesus Christ, mother -- what you need is a lawyer. Those guys -- that State Police detective -- they don't say get an attorney unless they mean it.

DOLORES
It's you I'm worried about, Selena.

SELENA
Mother, please --

DOLORES
You're my daughter -- I know that prob'ly feels like something better left alone, but it's true --

SELENA
-- Oh Christ, spare me the --

DOLORES
-- You're still my Selena. You're still my Good Girl and I can't help bein worried for you.

SELENA stalled by this. Uncomfortable, touched, angry; all of it at once. DOLORES reaching out for her hands. Taking them before she can pull away.

DOLORES
I can't help that no matter what I do.

SELENA
Mother...your hands...

DOLORES'S HANDS. Raw and creased and so worn out they're bleeding from the crackedness.

SELENA (OS)
What happened to your hands?

DOLORES pulling them away. Embarrassed.

SELENA
They look terrible, Mother. What happened to them?

DOLORES
Vera Donovan's what happened to 'em. Twenty-two years of Vera Donovan.

DOLORES turns away. Eyes back out over the water and --

WE PAN AROUND FROM THE OCEAN and into --

FLASHBACK

THE DONOVAN HOUSE. The same angle we saw in the first shot of the movie. But what a difference -- it's a bright sunny day in the Summer of 1972. Fresh paint -- manicured gardens new roof... A GROUNDS CREW at work; cleaning windows, mowing the lawn, readying the house for the season.

DOLORES (VO)
I guess you want to know somebody's life you look at their hands...

CUT TO

DOLORES'S HANDS -- twenty years younger, before they were ruined -- in her lap, clutching a dimestore handbag.

DOLORES is 33. Dressed in her Sunday best. Sitting in the FOYER OF THE DONOVAN HOUSE. Suddenly, A DOOR OPENS across the room. A LOCAL GIRL comes running out. She is weeping.

VERA (OS)
(calling after her)
Look on the bright side, dear! Your mother may be angry, but just think of the fun you'll have telling your friends what a bitch Vera Donovan is!

DOLORES watches the LOCAL GIRL flee the house in tears.

VERA (OS)
Next!

CUT TO

DONOVAN HOUSE SITTING ROOM. VERA DONOVAN in her chair, working a needlepoint sampler. Early fifties. A white-glove, pure-flint WASP.

VERA
I do not pretend to be an easy woman to work for, Dolores.

DOLORES across from her. Bag in her lap. Her game face.

VERA
This house has a number of rules. I'm sure you've heard them secondhand but I'll tell you in person so we can avoid a teary scene later on.

DOLORES nodding yes. Their dialogue fading, as we hear:

DOLORES (VO)
And she <u>did</u> have her ways -- did she ever. I don't know where she got her idears, but I do know she was a prisoner of 'em....
(continuing as we--)

CUT TO

<u>SERIES OF SHOTS</u> -- DOLORES WORKING FOR VERA THAT SUMMER

DOLORES (33) cleaning a bathroom.

DOLORES (VO)
...All the tubs had to be scrubbed out with Spic n Span. No Lestoil, no Top Job, no Mr. Clean. Just Spic n Span. God help you, she caught you with anything else...

DOLORES ironing.

DOLORES (VO)
...there was a piece of gauze you were supposed to put over before you starched. Never did a goddamn thing, so far as I could ever tell, but look out if she passed by and you didn't have that scrap hanging on the board...

CUT TO

THE DONOVAN LAWN. A bright Summer afternoon. JACK DONOVAN, mid-fifties, a prosperous businessman in golf togs, driving balls out into the surf.

DOLORES down the slope, hanging miles of white sheets on the line.

DOLORES (VO)
...But the sheets, now. That was one thing you didn't <u>ever</u> want to get wrong.

VERA appears at a second floor window with binoculars, peering down as Dolores hangs the sheets.

DOLORES (VO)
You coulda cut off her high-flown snobbish nose and she still woulda been able to smell a sheet that'd hung outside from one baked in the dryer... Course everything had to be hung perfect over the lines, and you had to use six pins on each one -- not four -- <u>six</u>.

VERA
Six pins, Dolores! You mind me now! Six, not four!

DOLORES (VO)
Her husband, he only came up once all summer, most a which he spent ignorin her anyway...

VERA
Jack! -- Jack, it's four-thirty!
(she's lonely)
Don't you want a cocktail?

JACK just keeps driving golf balls into the ocean, as we --

CUT TO

THE SITTING ROOM. DOLORES putting white, winter slip covers on the furniture. A CHAUFFEUR and HANDYMAN carrying luggage out to the car in the BG.

VERA
Dolores...

DOLORES turns. VERA in the doorway. Chanel and Vuitton.

VERA
I'm sure your winter schedule is rather hectic, but I need someone to touch up the house once a week. Dusting. Keeping the mice company.

DOLORES
I could do that.

VERA
Eight dollars a week was what I had in mind.

DOLORES
That'd be fine.

VERA
Then I'll see you next Memorial Day.

DOLORES nods. VERA shoulders her bag and walks.

CUT TO

WHITE SLIP COVERS being pulled from the furniture.

THE DONOVAN HOUSE MAIN ROOM. A Spring day. DOLORES and TWO OTHER MAIDS waxing the stairs. WORKMEN busy in the BG. opening the house for the summer. As we hear:

DOLORES (VO):
That winter Jack Donovan passed on. He died in a car crash in Baltimore.
(MORE)

DOLORES VO (cont)
I wasn't sure what to expect from Vera -- but gorry if she didn't show up in high spirits.

DOLORES and the MAIDS looking down to see --

VERA
(a grand entrance)
Dolores!

DOLORES
Up here, Missus Donovan.

VERA
I believe I've told you more than once I want those Welcome mats facing with the letters out and not in.

DOLORES
Yes ma'am.

VERA
I'll not have to say it again this Summer, will I?

DOLORES
No ma'am.

CUT TO

DOLORES'S HANDS. Young hands laying wet sheets onto the CLOTHESLINE. Steam rising in cold winter air.

DOLORES (VO)
Later on, after she moved up full-time, she offered me the job and I took it. I took it and I knew what kind of hell it was gonna be...

The YOUNG HANDS reach away and return as....

OLD HANDS. Swollen and raw. The same clothesline. The same drudge. But twenty years have passed.

DOLORES (VO)
(matter-of-fact, again she is not a whiner)
Your fingers're wet and they're <u>cold</u>. But you go on to the next one, and the next, and the next...

DOLORES at fifty-five, working in the <u>bitter</u> cold.

DOLORES (VO)
...Even after she had her stokes, weak as she was, she'd still find the bitchery some days...

VERA, a crippled seventy-five, at the upstairs window.

VERA
(yelling down)
Six pins! Remember to use six pins! Don't you let the wind blow my good sheets down the yard!

DOLORES listening. Going through the motions.

DOLORES (VO)
...Your fingers turn red, and they slow up, and you got snot leakin off y'nose, and you know it's only December and by February the skin's gonna be cracked so bad it'll break open and bleed if you clench a fist.

VERA
Mind me, now! You better because I'm watching and I'm counting!

DOLORES bearing down. Just plain shit work.

DOLORES (VO)
...And there's not a goddam thing to do 'cept go on to the next. So that's just what you do.
(fading as we--)

<u>DISSOLVE OUT OF FLASHBACK AND</u>

BACK TO -- THE PRESENT

DOLORES AND SELENA, as they were, out on the East End rocks. DOLORES rubbing her hands. SELENA putting out a smoke.

SELENA
Nobody made you stay there.

DOLORES
I needed the money.

SELENA
Not in the beginning. Not eight dollars a week.

DOLORES
That's when I needed it most. Not for me -- for you.

SELENA
Oh, that's perfect, Mother...
So it's my fault.

Disgusted, SELENA turns away. Climbing back for the house.

DOLORES
(following her)
That's not what I meant.

SELENA
Nothing like a big steaming bowl
of guilt for breakfast.

DOLORES
(trying to keep up)
You think your father cared whether
you ever got off this befrigged
Island?

SELENA
Here we go...

DOLORES
I put that money -- every week I
put it away in your account.
For school. To get you the hell
outta this place once and for all.

SELENA
Well, it worked like a charm!

SELENA stops suddenly --

FRANK and MACKEY standing there, watching them.

FRANK
Morning, ladies. A little morning
walk?

DOLORES
Nope, we're just packing up the speed
boat so's I can make my big escape.

DOLORES will keep walking. FRANK and MACKEY falling into step with her. SELENA in the rear.

DOLORES
Somethin we can help you with?

FRANK
We need a hair sample, Dolores.

DOLORES
How's that?

MACKEY
(struggling to keep up)
We need a piece of your hair, Miss Claiborne. We're running some tests. Just a small clipping would be fine.

DOLORES
Would it now?

FRANK
You don't have to do this, Dolores.
(to Selena)
It's up to her. We'd appreciate it, is all.

SELENA
I think we'll take a pass on that.

DOLORES
Bring your scissors, did you?

MACKEY
Matter of fact, I did.

SELENA
Mother, I <u>really</u> don't think this is wise.

DOLORES
It's okay, Selena. I got nothin to hide. Let these boys have their fun.
(she stops, turns to face Mackey)
You want it? You cut it.

MACKEY thrown by this. Really thrown.

DOLORES
Take any piece you like. I ain't doing any beauty pageants this week.

MACKEY pulls a pair of scissors from his pocket. He moves toward her. Awkward here. Awkward with women. He fumbles for a moment. Snips. Backs away quickly. Handing the sample to FRANK who has an evidence bag.

DOLORES
Anything else?

MACKEY
We spoke to Shelia Jolander last night. She told us she heard you on more than one occasion threaten to kill Vera Donovan. Is that true?

DOLORES
If she'd been there everyday 'stead a once a week, she'd a heard plenty more than that. Vera at the end, the way she got, it's a wonder I didn't say it every hour.

Dead silence. SELENA finds a smoke. MACKEY staring.

DOLORES
You go ahead, Mr. Mackey, you scribble that down in your pad there. You make a note on that. Long as you write down that sayin a thing, and doin it 're two separate things.
(a smile)
But then, your wife prob'ly already told you that.

MACKEY
(she hit a nerve)
My wife, Miss Claiborne, died twelve years ago. Bone cancer.
(pointedly)
Natural causes.

FRANK
(jumping in)
Okay. I think we'll press on here.

DOLORES
I'll need to get into Vera's house. I got things up there I'll need. Clothes and my personals.

FRANK
We can go over tomorrow. We're shipping out Vera's body this afternoon. Her nephew in Baltimore is holding the funeral Monday.

DOLORES
Ain't that lovely. Twenty years that little piss squirt never once came up n visited.

FRANK
Why don't we say around one o'clock tomorrow?

DOLORES
Fine by me.

FRANK gets into the PATROL CAR and starts it up. MACKEY lingers at the passenger side. His eyes locked on SELENA,

measuring her. She turns away. He slowly eases himself into the car. FRANK puts it into gear -- starting to turn around.

SELENA
(quietly to Dolores)
What the hell're you doing? Why are you making an enemy out of that guy?

DOLORES
I ain't makin one. I'm keepin one.

SELENA
And what is that supposed to mean?

FRANK working his way through a three-point turn. MACKEY staring through the windshield. His eyes locked on SELENA as the car completes the turn.

DOLORES
You gonna tell me you don't remember him?

SELENA
That's what he said when I met him.
(lost)
Who the hell is he?

DOLORES, incredulous, stares at SELENA as THE PATROL CAR WIPES THE FRAME and we --

FLASHBACK

JOHN MACKEY as a much younger man. A spit-polish Maine State Police uniform. No cane. No limp. An ancient DISTRICT ATTORNEY and bespectacled MEDICAL EXAMINER seated beside him.

It is the Summer of 1975. We are in a dreary, old HEARING ROOM on the mainland in the Washington County Courthouse. An inquest in progress. A JUDGE, at a desk, presiding. No jury. A DOZEN PEOPLE in the gallery.

DOLORES (36) seated in a folding chair across the aisle.

MACKEY
That's all well and good, Miss St. George, but...
(shuffling papers)
It says here -- you stated that at the time of your father's death, you were working as a maid at the hotel in Jonesport?

SELENA, age 12, in the WITNESS BOX. She is clearly nervous. Back straight. Mouth dry.

SELENA

Yes.

MACKEY

I spoke to Mrs. Deveraux at the hotel, and she told me that until that week, your mother had not permitted you to spend the night. I was simply wondering why your mother allowed you to stay on the mainland through the week on this particular occasion?

SELENA hesitates. Eyes swimming out toward DOLORES.

MACKEY

Were there problems at home perhaps?
(beat)
Your mom and dad, that's a happy situation?
(pressing)
Miss St. George?

SELENA

The eclipse.
(quietly)
Because of the eclipse. The hotel was full. So the money -- they said we'd make twice as much.
(tears welling)
She, my mom, she let me stay...it was just -- just for the money...

MACKEY

So this was all about money?

SELENA crying now. MACKEY about to continue, when --

DOLORES

(jumping in)
My God, You Honor, how long're you gonna let this go on?

MACKEY

The sooner this girl starts telling the truth, the sooner we'll be done.

DOLORES

If he's out to torture somebody, I'd be happy to get back up on the hot seat.

MACKEY
(turning on her)
Mrs. St. George...

DOLORES
Hell, forget the missus, anybody who's gonna 'cuse me of killin my husband can go right ahead and call me Dolores.

LAUGHTER throughout the room. Nervous LAUGHTER that builds as the JUDGE joins in. MACKEY just burning as his moment slips away, and we come --

OUT OF FLASHBACK AND

BACK TO -- THE PRESENT

THE VANDALIZED WINDOW. Shards of glass all around the frame.

DOLORES reaches in -- she'll try and pull out one of the shards --

DOLORES
So don't be talkin to me about makin enemies. No sir and no ma'am.
(the glass breaks off in her hand)
That sonofabitch's been waitin a long time to pick over my bones.
(tossing the shard into a cardboard box)
Hand me that axe.

SELENA, behind her, on the porch. She turns -- there's THE AXE (the same one we saw Dolores hand Joe 20 years earlier.) She picks it up carefully and hands it over.

THE WINDOW as DOLORES rakes THE AXE around the frame -- shattered glass SPLINTERING TO THE PORCH as we --

CUT TO

THE TOWN OF LITTLE TALL. Main Street. DOLORES AND SELENA getting out of the rental car.

DOLORES
I'm gonna get some putty and a new pane. Maybe I'll see if I can't find us a steak.
(hopefully)
Have us a nice meal?

SELENA
I'll meet you back here.

DOLORES nods. Sets off, as we --

CUT TO

MAIN STREET. Quiet. No traffic. DOLORES heading for the market. Her expression one of steely determination. And now, as she proceeds, we see why --

A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN coming down the sidewalk. Struggling with a dawdling CHILD. She sees DOLORES. She freezes.

DOLORES
Afternoon, Pam. Any steaks left down at Shafer's?

PAM tightens her grip on the CHILD'S hand. Turning abruptly for the street -- anywhere but here.

PAM
I'll pray for you, Dolores.
(hurrying off)
That's the best I can do.

DOLORES hangs tough. Shoulders her bag and keeps on walking.

CUT TO

TWO FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD PUNKS outside THE BARBER SHOP. Young, townie jerks sharing a cigarette. They look up as DOLORES approaches.

PUNK #1
Hey, Miss Claiborne.

DOLORES nods as she passes. She knows them.

PUNK #2
Kill anyone else today?

DOLORES
Not just yet. But when I change my mind, I know exactly where I'm gonna start.

THE PUNKS ditch their smoke. DOLORES watching as they rush back into the BARBER SHOP.

CUT TO

A PAYPHONE in the rear of the local gin mill. It's dark. A JUKEBOX low in the BG. SELENA juggling a vodka and a cigarette, on the line with PETER, her editor.

SELENA
It's a small domestic drama up here, Peter. It'll be over Monday morning. I can be in L.A. Tuesday.

PETER (OS)
Selena...these family things, I've been through it, they take a lot out of you.

SELENA
I'm telling you it's not a problem.

Dead air. SELENA waiting as we --

CUT TO

PETER at the other end of the line in his New York office. Staring out the window. Speakerphone on his desk.

SELENA'S VOICE
(over the speaker)
Look, we both want me to do this story, Peter. I'm telling you I'm out of here Monday at the latest.

PETER hesitates. Trapped.

SELENA
Are you there?

PETER
I've given the piece to Maureen.

CUT TO

SELENA at the payphone. A bodyblow.

PETER'S VOICE
I'm sorry...I had to pull the trigger.
(struggling here)
I just wasn't -- it's nothing to do with you, you know that --

SELENA
Jesus, Peter....

PETER'S VOICE
It's the pressure -- you know that -- there's heat all over this one --

SELENA
You goddamn pimp --

PETER'S VOICE
Selena, wait a minute --

SELENA
-- sending me up here --

PETER'S VOICE
-- I never promised you --

SELENA
-- you shipped me out to make it easier!

PETER'S VOICE trailing away as she lowers the phone. His explanation garbled and small as she slowly hangs up. She stands there a moment. Dazed.

CUT TO

THE BAR. Booths and a rail. A few hardcores spread out in the dark. SELENA comes out from the phone. She spots up near the BARTENDER.

SELENA
(an empty glass)
I'll do this again.

She's fishing for money as the BARTENDER tops off her vodka.

MACKEY (OS)
Put that on my tab.

It's MACKEY standing slowly from the booth behind her.

SELENA
I don't think so.

SELENA lays cash on the bar. The BARTENDER makes change.

MACKEY
(the stool beside her)
Do you mind?

SELENA
Shouldn't you be off somewhere analyzing my mother's hair?

MACKEY
I was thinking how hard it must be for you. Protecting her, that is.

SELENA looks over. MACKEY taking his time.

MACKEY
She's a hardy soul, isn't she? Hell, she might just live another fifty years. Next eclipse is due in '96. She gets away with it this time, she might actually have a chance to kill someone else before she's through.
(beat)
That something you want to worry about for the next twenty years?
(beat)
She needs help, Selena.

SELENA drinks up. Looks over at him.

SELENA
This really is a thing with you, isn't it?

MACKEY
You know how it is. We're probably more alike than you'd care to believe.
(beat)
We live alone. We have our work. I have no children. My cases are my family. In thirty years, I've handled eighty-six homicides. I've closed eighty-five of them to my satisfaction.

SELENA
You sent that fax to my office, didn't you?
(silence his answer)
You sonofabitch.

SELENA finds her bag. Rushing to leave.

MACKEY
Anytime you want to talk...
(as she goes)
She's dangerous, Selena.

SELENA walking. And gone. MACKEY watching her leave.

CUT TO

THE DINNER TABLE. Night. DOLORES and SELENA over steaks and beer. SELENA quiet and withdrawn. DOLORES trying to bring her out.

DOLORES
You were a wonderful cook.

SELENA
Please. I can't even defrost.

DOLORES
You were. You'd put supper on the table three nights outta five. I was workin, I'd come back, you'd have the house clean, your homework done and food on the table.
(beat)
You're just outta practice, that's all. You find someone to look after you'll see, it'll all come back.

SELENA
Someone to look after?

DOLORES
You must have boyfriends. Beautiful woman like you, smart and out in the world. They must be just flockin around you like flies.

SELENA laughs dismissively. Sips her beer.

DOLORES
You tellin me there's nobody?

SELENA
I'm telling you there's a lot of nobodies.

Silence. They go back to their food. And then, suddenly -- the sound of a REVVING ENGINE and GUNSHOTS from outside --

DOLORES
Those sonsabitches...

SELENA frozen, just paralyzed, as TWO MORE SHOTGUN BLASTS ring out in the distance. DOLORES already in motion -- striding for the front door and --

CUT TO

A PICK-UP TRUCK at the bottom of the driveway. A bunch of DRUNK LOCAL YAHOOS piled on the thing. No faces. LAUGHTER and VOICES and another GUN BLAST shooting into the sky and --

DOLORES on the porch -- grabbing THE AXE that's laying there.

DOLORES
(screaming down)
Come on up you little ass pickin squirts! I know who you are! Chester Lavelier n the rest of ya's! Come on up, ya got somethin to say!

A VOICE (OS)
(from the truck)
Get offa Little Tall Island, you goddamn murderin bitch!

DOLORES coming fast off the porch, as THE TRUCK spins back onto the road. Tires SCREECHING as it weaves wildly away from the house. DOLORES watching them go. Venom in her eyes. Planting the axe firmly in a log. Turning back finally --

TO SEE

SELENA through the screen door. Inside the house. Crying. Tears building from someplace deep -- emotions she can't control. She turns away and --

CUT TO

SELENA in the BATHROOM DOORWAY beneath the stairs. Blowing her nose. Still crying. Trying to get it together.

DOLORES
(entering behind her)
It's a bad place, here. For you. It's a bad place and you took it with you, didn't you? You didn't leave it at all. Here I thought you got clear away and you didn't, did you?

SELENA is silent. Fighting the tears just makes it worse. DOLORES looking on helplessly, as THE PHONE BEGINS RINGING from the living room. DOLORES, shocked, turns --

THE OLD PHONE in it's cradle, across the room. It RINGS again, but SELENA can't hear it because this is a --

<u>FLASHBACK</u>

THE PHONE. RINGING again. A HAND reaching in.

SELENA at thirteen, answering the phone. It is the Winter of 1976. Night. We're in the living room.

SELENA
Hello?

A VOICE (OS)
(over the phone)
Did you help your mother kill your dad, or did she just do it herself?

SELENA ashen. Terrified. Paralyzed.

DOLORES, age 36, rushing out of the kitchen -- seeing SELENA and knowing instantly what's happened --

DOLORES
(grabbing the phone)
Who is this? Who is it?
(furious)
I find out who's makin these calls, I swear I'll hang your privates from Battiscan Light!
(dial tone and--)

DOLORES turns back to find SELENA weeping.

DOLORES
Oh, honey...please...it's okay...

SELENA
Get away from me! -- lemme alone!

SELENA flailing free -- out of control -- sobbing now --

DOLORES
Selena -- please, honey --

SELENA
-- just get away! -- get away!
(continuing as--)

She completely loses it -- DOLORES helpless -- SELENA exploding into a seizure of panic and fear and anger and shame and -- a TABLE goes over -- things falling -- flailing around with all the pain and fury a thirteen-year-old girl can muster -- weeping uncontrollably, and it's horrible and only getting worse, as SELENA runs past her mother, toward the stairwell, and --

DOLORES whirls after her and we come --

OUT OF FLASHBACK AND

SELENA standing in the bathroom door. Drying her eyes.

DOLORES
(undone now)
...It was a bad patch. You had a bad patch n now you're feelin it all over again.

SELENA
"Bad patch?"
(incredulous)
I had a fucking nervous breakdown, Mother.

DOLORES
No... No honey... It was a hard time and you got through...
(beat)
You needed a rest, that's all -- you snapped back just fine.
(pure denial)
Gorry, you can't have a nervous breakdown and get a full scholarship to Vassar College -- you just had a bad patch --

SELENA
What am I doing?
(pushing past her--)
I must be out of my mind to come back here.

SELENA pushing past DOLORES. Rushing back out of the house. The door nearly SLAMMING OFF IT'S HINGES as she disappears.

DOLORES left there alone. Frightened. Hurt. Trying to get a grip when she hears A CAR ENGINE starting from outside. DOLORES moves slowly toward the door. Opens it to the --

THE BLINDING SHOCK of headlights and the SCREEN GOES WHITE from the glare, and then BLOOMS BACK into the details of a daytime --

FLASHBACK

DOLORES'S POV looking down off the porch. A bright, hot day in the Summer of 1975. THIRTY MEN are coming toward the house from the far distance. In formation. A search party, moving slowly, struggling solemnly through the meadow and brambles beyond the property.

SELENA, age twelve, steps off the porch. Watching the men. Tensely, quietly, edging forward.

DOLORES, age 36, stands above her on the porch. She doesn't see SELENA moving away because her eyes are locked on the search party in the distance. The quiet broken suddenly by --

A SEARCHER'S VOICE (OS)
Hey, Sheriff! Over here! Over here!

DOLORES
Selena!

SELENA turns back. Frightened.

DOLORES
Get in the house. Right now.

SECOND SEARCHER'S VOICE (OS)
Jesus, shit... Lookit this!

DOLORES and SELENA staring at each other.

SELENA
What did you do to him, Mommy?

A tough pause. DOLORES wiping at a single tear.

DOLORES
Not a thing, honey. I swear it.

The sound of THE MEN RUSHING across the field (OS) as SELENA breaks the moment and runs into the house.

DOLORES turning back to the field as the light gets sucked out...and the Men disappear...the sound fades and we...

MATCH FRAME DISSOLVE TO --

SELENA'S HEADLIGHTS raking the porch as THE RENTAL CAR pulls out onto the road and speeds away.

CUT TO

A WELCOME MAT. Somebody's front door. DOLORES kneels down, turning the thing around the way it's supposed to go.

THE DONOVAN HOUSE FRONT DOOR. The next day. SELENA, FRANK STAMSHAW and a DEPUTY waiting for DOLORES to straighten the mat out to her satisfaction.

CUT TO

THE DONOVAN FRONT ROOM. A solemn procession: FRANK leading the way. DOLORES behind him. SELENA, carrying an empty duffel bag, hanging back.

THE MAIN STAIRWAY. MACKEY on the landing. Watching them approach. He's been working hard; proof of that littered around the room: a ladder, a workbench covered with plastic bags, tape cordons off a section of broken railing, the wheelchair, tagged as evidence, at the bottom of the stairs.

MACKEY
I'm going to ask you to step very carefully on the way up. We've got plastic down, we're still taking blood samples.

FRANK motions for DOLORES to go ahead. She hesitates.

MACKEY
If you'd feel more comfortable, Ms. Claiborne, you can always use the back stairs.

DOLORES starts climbing. Fuck him.

CUT TO

A PICTURE OF SELENA. A framed, magazine photo.

A GUEST ROOM UPSTAIRS. Dolores's room. Pleasant enough. SELENA staring at her picture on the nightstand.

FRANK
(searching a closet--)
...another pair of shoes here.

DOLORES
No. That's it.
(looking around)
I need my scrapbook. I think it's in Vera's room.

CUT TO

VERA'S ROOM. Classic WASP clutter meets invalid despair. A hospital bed with antique nightstands. Everything as it was the day of her death: bed unmade, medication, etc.

MACKEY
(holding the scrapbook)
So what's this?

DOLORES in the room. FRANK behind her. SELENA at the door.

DOLORES
It's Selena's articles. I'd read em to Vera. She liked it.

MACKEY checking it out. Taking his time. DOLORES forced to wait. Looking around the room and --

FLASHBACK

The room. Six months earlier. Night. The blue light of a silent television.

The scrapbook open on the bed.

VERA sitting there too. A crippled, 75-year-old woman propped up in bed, crying like a child. DOLORES behind her, stroking her hair. Trying to soothe her. Stroking and soothing, on and on. Two strange birds, in their nightgowns, all alone.

OUT OF FLASHBACK AND

DOLORES, as she was, still waiting for MACKEY to digest the scrapbook. She glances around --

DOLORES
Jeezly crow --

MACKEY looks over -- DOLORES moving angrily for the bed. Picking up a bed pan --

DOLORES
Gorry, couldn't you even clean up after her? What kinda people are you?

MACKEY
You put that down right now.

DOLORES
You gonna tell me this is evidence?

MACKEY
That's exactly what I'm telling you!

DOLORES tosses it toward him. He jumps back. It CLANGS to the floor.

FRANK
(stepping in)
Okay, okay...everybody cool down.

DOLORES
That scrapbook is mine.

FRANK looks to MACKEY. An appeal. Let's get this over.

CUT TO

THE FRONT DOOR. Minutes later. FRANK on the front steps. DOLORES, clutching the scrapbook, exits the house. MACKEY holding the door for SELENA.

FRANK
So we'll see you day after tomorrow. Nine a.m. Town Hall.

DOLORES
Don't put your fur up, Frank. I'll be there.

MACKEY
I have a feeling we could wrap this up right now, Miss Claiborne.

DOLORES turns back. MACKEY waiting for her.

MACKEY
It's not going to be like last time.

DOLORES
Is that so?

SELENA
(taking her arm)
Mother, let's just go, okay?

DOLORES
(shaking her off)
You listen to me, Mr. Grand High Poobah of Upper Butt Crack, I'm just about half-past give-a-shit with your fun n games. My husband's death was ruled an accident and you know it better'n anyone.

MACKEY
"Death By Misadventure," to be exact.

DOLORES
You ask around, I'm sure there's people'd tell you I had plenty of reasons to kill my husband. But Vera? Why the hell would I kill her? All I am is out of a job and a nice room to sleep in.

MACKEY
But you don't need a job, do you?
(beat)
Motive?
(he smiles)
I'd say one million, six-hundred thousand dollars was quite a motive.

DOLORES
What?

MACKEY
Your mother's a wealthy woman, Selena.

DOLORES
What the hell're you talkin about?

MACKEY
I spoke to Vera's lawyer in Baltimore last night. She left you everything. Every last cent.

DOLORES pale, just stricken. SELENA shocked into silence.

DOLORES
She can't do that... You're lyin.

MACKEY
You're a millionaire, Ms. Claiborne.

FRANK
John, I'm not sure -- this ain't hardly the place --

MACKEY
Back off, Frank.

DOLORES
That's plain crazy! She'd never do that -- never!

MACKEY
She keep it a secret from you too, Selena? Or maybe you knew about it. Cause this will, I mean, hell, it's only eight years old.

DOLORES turns and starts walking. Fleeing.

MACKEY
(calling after her)
You want to wait for the District Attorney, Monday morning, or should we go take care of this now?

DOLORES grimly striding as fast as she can away from the house. Past Selena's car. Walking toward the road.

CUT TO

INSIDE SELENA'S CAR. SELENA at the wheel, driving away from the Donovan house on the town road. She's alone. She pulls to a stop. Leaning over and throwing open the passenger side door.

SELENA
Get in the car, Mother.

DOLORES walking up the road. Ignoring her.

SELENA
Get in the goddamn car!

SELENA, fed up, jumps out of the car and --

WE'RE ON THE ROAD

SELENA
(in pursuit)
You had no idea she'd left you the money?

DOLORES
I swear it.

SELENA
Over a million dollars, Mother.

DOLORES
(red hot here)
That bitch. That malicious, high-flown, harping bitch!

SELENA
Oh give it a rest already!
(she stops)
You can afford a lawyer now!

DOLORES wheels on her. But before she can respond --

THE PATROL CAR pulls up beside them. One look at FRANK and MACKEY and you know they've seen them fighting.

MACKEY
(rolling down his window)
Car trouble?

SELENA
(tightly)
We're quite fine. Thank you.

MACKEY nods to FRANK. The PATROL CAR pulls away. They are alone again.

DOLORES
I wish I had killed her...
(losing it)
Leaving me that money! I wish I had -- I wish I had killed her!

SELENA
What happened in that house?

DOLORES turning back to SELENA, as we --

FLASHBACK

A MOP moving over a hardwood floor.

DOLORES (55) laboring alone. A long hallway of work.

VERA'S VOICE (OS)
(from down the hall)
Dolores! Duh-lorrrr-isssss!

CUT TO

VERA'S ROOM. VERA, 75, in bed. Looking like hell.

VERA
I wet myself.

DOLORES
(pulling open the shades)
What else is new?

VERA
How long have I been out?

DOLORES
Since you last made sense? I guess about ten days.

VERA sourly watching DOLORES fuss around the room.

VERA
Just leave me wet, don't you? When I'm not thinking straight enough to keep on you, that's what you do isn't it?

DOLORES
Ayhuh. It's a reg'lar party round here when you're snoozin.

VERA
Where's my China pig?

DOLORES
It's on the bureau where you had me put it last time we went through this nonsense.

VERA
Are you being smart?

DOLORES
No, Vera, if I'd been smart, I'd've gotten done workin for you a long time ago.

VERA
I told you, I'm wet. And I want my China Pig.. And I'm in no mood to listen to your back-chatter.

DOLORES
Then I'd pack a couple of them fancy French pillows in your ears, or else I'd shut the hell up.

VERA turning away. Anger replaced by shame as DOLORES pulls down the sheets.

DOLORES
(the bed a mess)
Jesus H. Christ...

CUT TO

THE STAIRWAY. DOLORES carrying a tray of food upstairs.

CUT TO

VERA in her wheelchair. Staring at her breakfast. Her CHINA PIG on the table beside her. DOLORES making the bed.

DOLORES
You're having a good day, Vera, might as well make the best of it. God knows, I'm tired of spoonin food into ya.

VERA
You're poisoning me, aren't you, Dolores? Slow but sure, that's what you're doing.

DOLORES
No, ma'am. When I get ready to settle your hash, I won't bother with poison -- I'll just shove you out the window and there'll be one less smelly bitch in the world.

VERA
Well, don't you have a hair across your ass today, Dolores Claiborne?

DOLORES
Don't go too far, Vera. Don't.

DOLORES gathers the soiled bedding from the floor.

VERA
I'll go as far as I damn well want, yes, I will...
(she's crying)
If this is what's going to pass as living, I'll damn well say what I like. Yes, I will...

DOLORES
I'll make some tea. You'll feel better.

VERA
No! -- No I won't! I won't feel better! I never will!
(sobbing now)
I'll never feel better again!

CUT TO

A TEA KETTLE. As it's set down on the stove.

DOLORES setting out the cups. A moment of quiet, suddenly broken as she hears the sound of SOMETHING CRASHING from upstairs. DOLORES shakes her head, another small crisis.

CUT TO

THE CHINA PIG on the floor in a thousand pieces. Loose change scattered everywhere.

VERA'S WHEELCHAIR disappearing through the door and --

CUT TO

DOLORES coming for the stairs. Looking up, and --

DOLORES
Vera! What the hell're you doing?

CUT TO

VERA wheeling herself along the hallway. Heading for the stairs and --

CUT TO

DOLORES starting up the stairs.

DOLORES
Vera, just stop now...
(picking up her pace)
You hear me?

CUT TO

VERA lurching along. She's not stopping. A determined look on her face. Straining from the effort and --

CUT TO

DOLORES running now -- about to top the stairs -- she slips and falls -- trying to catch herself and --

CUT TO

VERA still coming --

VERA
You get out of my way, Dolores!
You hear me? -- Out of my way!

CUT TO

DOLORES making her feet -- her dress catching beneath her as she does -- SEAMS RIPPING as she stands -- hobbled by her torn slip, but she's not stopping now --

DOLORES
Vera, you just stop this foolishness!
You're gonna hurt yourself!

CUT TO

VERA wheeling toward her -- crazed and determined and --

CUT TO

DOLORES rushing to block her path and -- VERA kicking at her -- striking -- DOLORES more surprised than hurt --

DOLORES
Vera, I said stop!

VERA ten feet from the stairs -- DOLORES rushing around, behind the wheelchair -- taking hold of the handles and starting to pull --

DOLORES
What in the name of God has got--
(not finishing this because--)

She's falling -- on her ass as the wheelchair suddenly loses a hundred and fifty pounds of ballast and --

THE WHEELCHAIR CRASHING to the floor and --

VERA is standing and --

DOLORES struggling to get up -- frantic now and --

VERA is walking and --

DOLORES tangled in the wheelchair -- a wild grab and --

VERA
-- Dolores, no! -- Leave me be! --
Leave me! -- Duh-lorrr-isssss --
(stepping out over the stairs, as we --)

CUT TO

DOLORES hearing -- seeing -- the horrible fall that we witnessed earlier. Standing there helplessly beside the empty wheelchair. And in a moment it's over. Silence. DOLORES simply staggered. Trying just to breathe. Dress torn, hair tangled. And then, it gets worse..

VERA'S VOICE (OS)
(whispering from below)
Dolores...

DOLORES hesitates. Frozen there. And then, suddenly, she's in motion -- rushing down the stairs --

ON THE LANDING. VERA's broken body laying there.

DOLORES
(racing to her side)
Omigod... Vera... Omigod...

VERA struggling to take her hand.

VERA
Dolores...

DOLORES
Don't try to talk. I'm goin down-stairs. I got to call the doctor.

VERA
No.
(her grip tightening)
No doctor. No hospital.

DOLORES
You'll be all right, Vera. You lie still n don't move, you'll be fine.

VERA
Dolores Claiborne says I'm going to be fine.
(her voice clear now)
What a relief it is to have a professional opinion.

DOLORES shocked out of her panic by this response.

VERA
I'm as good as dead, and you know it as well as I do. My back's broken, I think. I can't feel much at all.

DOLORES
Why, Vera? -- Why'd you do this?

VERA
Because there's only one thing left worth deciding, and that's whether I'm going to die in my time or in some hospital's. My time is now, Dolores. I'm tired and I'm ready.

DOLORES unable to free her hand from VERA's grip.

DOLORES
-- let me go call, please, Vera --

VERA
(not releasing her)
-- I'm tired of pissing down my legs and forgetting who came to see me half an hour after they're gone. I'm tired of seeing my husband's face in the corners. I'm tired and I want to be done. Will you help me, Dolores? Will you please help me die?

DOLORES rocked. Lost there for a moment. Holding VERA's hand to her chest. Reaching down to brush away a strand of blood-stained hair from her cheek.

VERA
Please...don't make me beg...

DOLORES
(finally)
If that's what you want, Vera, I'll help you.

VERA
Yes. Yes it is what I want.
(tears now)
God bless you, Dolores.

DOLORES kneels to kiss VERA.

DOLORES
Don't you fret.

VERA
(pain taking over now)
Hurry, Dolores. If you really want to help me, please hurry...

CUT TO

A KITCHEN DRAWER whipping open -- pulled so violently that it flies off it's housing -- KNIVES and CLEAVERS CLATTERING across the floor -- a TEA KETTLE SCREAMING on the stove -- WIDER TO FIND

DOLORES, panicked, staring down at the KNIVES at her feet. Eyes scanning wildly around the room -- looking for something -- What? -- A CAST IRON POT on the back of the stove -- she grabs for it -- her arm grazing THE TEA KETTLE -- burned -- recoiling -- the kettle falls -- hot water spilling -- she jumps back -- something -- anything -- and there it is --

HER HAND reaching for A LARGE MARBLE ROLLING PIN and --

OUT OF FLASHBACK

BACK TO -- THE PRESENT

CLOSE-UP -- SELENA. Her expression skeptical. She shakes her head in disgust and turns OUT OF FRAME and --

THE ROADSIDE. SELENA marching back to the car. DOLORES in pursuit.

DOLORES
You don't believe me, do you?

SELENA
What difference does it make?

DOLORES
You think I killed her.

SELENA
I'm not your problem.

DOLORES
Even after what I told you.

SELENA
What I think doesn't mean shit!
It's the rest of the world you better start worrying about.

SELENA gets back into the car. SLAMS shut the door. DOLORES walking slowly back to the passenger side, as we --

CUT TO

THE JOHNNY WALKER RED BOTTLE. Nearly empty.

SELENA alone at the kitchen table. Night. Working on her laptop computer. Journalistic clutter all around her -- cassette recorder...notebooks...diskettes...

She sits back. She hits the "print" button. The WHIR of a portable laser printer as it begins to work.

CUT TO

THE FRONT PORCH. DOLORES alone, sitting in the dark. An old coat against the cold. The door opens behind her --

SELENA
I made a list of attorneys.

SELENA offers the sheet of paper.

SELENA
These are all big muscle firms. New York, Philadelphia, Washington. It could take a few days. That's why on Monday you're not going to say a word.
(beat)
Take it.

DOLORES will not. She stands. Past SELENA, to the door --

AND INTO

THE HOUSE. DOLORES finding the Scotch. She needs a shot.

SELENA
(entering behind her)
In case you missed it, I'm trying to help you.

DOLORES
What you said this afternoon, about it not makin a difference what you think -- you're wrong.
(she downs the drink)
You think I give a fiddler's fuck what anybody else says about me? Some District Attorney, or a Judge -- any of these lackwits in town? I nursed myself offa that tit a long time ago. It's you -- what you think's the only thing left that's important.

SELENA
I can't send you to prison!

DOLORES
You think that's the end of the world?
(pouring another drink)
What in God's name could they possibly do to me ain't been done already? Gorry, might be a relief. Sit n sleep. Three meals served up everyday.

SELENA
Maybe you're just happier being miserable. Is that it?
(beat)
Is that it, mother?

DOLORES
I want you to understand.

SELENA
I don't understand, mother. Vera's a bitch. She's abusive, she's mean, she's cheap -- Why not leave? Why not just walk? And Dad. Okay, he was a drunk. Maybe he was a lousy husband, but, I mean, come on --

DOLORES
(incredulous)
-- a lousy husband? --

SELENA
-- you think you were the first woman to be in an unhappy marriage? --

DOLORES
-- how can you? --

SELENA
-- maybe you're right, maybe he hit you --

DOLORES
You're defendin him!

SELENA
Nobody made you stay!

DOLORES
How can you say that?

SELENA
Because I know! Because I know when people hurt you, you can always leave!

Now there is silence. DOLORES standing there, shattered.

DOLORES
You're not responsible, Selena. You need to know that.

SELENA
Look, here's the goddamn list --
(throwing it down)
Do what you want with it.

DOLORES
You really don't remember, do you?

SELENA
(not listening)
You want to go to prison, knock yourself out.

SELENA turns around to find DOLORES staring at her.

DOLORES
That's why you're so unsettled, ain't it? You honest to God don't remember.

SELENA
"Unsettled?" Don't you mean, "boogery," mother?
(superior here)
If you're attempting some sort of meaningful analysis, perhaps we'd better define our terms --

SELENA gathering her stuff into the bag. DOLORES rushing to pour a shot.

DOLORES
(quickly)
-- we'll have another drink --

SELENA
-- it's a cornerstone of critical thinking, Mother -- the ability to communicate with an agreed-upon vocabulary --

DOLORES
Selena. I'm asking you to talk with me.

SELENA
I've had my fun for the night.

DOLORES suddenly in her path. Steel.

DOLORES
You sit down right this minute.
(no way out)
We are gonna sit at this table and have a drink. N when we're through -- when I'm through -- then you can run upstairs n take whichever one a those pills make you feel the best.

SELENA overwhelmed by this tone. Reluctantly folding. DOLORES pulls a chair for her. SELENA sits.

THE GLASS OF SCOTCH -- Dolores's hand pushing it across the table. It sits there a moment, and then...

A MAN'S HAND reaches in to pick it up, and --

FLASHBACK

THE DINNER TABLE. It is the spring of 1975. Sundown. JOE, age 38, at the table. He is unshaven. He wears a ratty t-shirt. He holds the Scotch like a threat.

JOE
Don't say a fucking word.

DOLORES, age 36, staring at him over her dinner. SELENA, age 12, between them. SELENA looks terrible -- pale, baggy clothes, hair stringy and unwashed.

JOE downs the drink. Savoring it.

DOLORES
'Fore you get too deep in that to make sense, I was wonderin if you took a look at her report card.

SELENA head down. No reaction.

JOE
I saw it. So what?
(pouring another one)
Everybody slips now n then.

SELENA
May I be excused?

DOLORES
Not till you tell me how an honor roll student who skips the whole seventh grade can go from straight A's to D's and C's in space of two semesters.

JOE
Oh, leave her alone already...
Hell, it's not like you were some great genius at school.
(he drinks)
Claibornes, shit... Wa'nt one a ya even born in hospital for crissake.

SELENA
May I please be excused?

JOE
Go on then. Go.

SELENA leaves the table quickly. DOLORES staring at JOE, watching him retreat into another Scotch.

CUT TO

THE DEVEREAUX HOTEL. Day. Spring of 1975. We're on the mainland, the town of Jonesport. The HOTEL an old, three-story clapboard affair not far from the pier where the ferry lets off. TWO TEENAGE GIRLS exit the hotel. Laughing and playful because the workday's over and they're free.

SELENA exits the hotel. Alone. Subdued. She starts down the street and then stops suddenly --

SELENA
Mom? What are <u>you</u> doin here?

DOLORES
(waiting for her)
I had some shoppin. I thought maybe you and I could ride back on the ferry together. You mind company?

Off SELENA's troubled reaction we --

CUT TO

THE FERRY. DOLORES and SELENA on the aft deck. Alone. A gorgeous Spring afternoon. The two of them standing there watching the gulls play in the wake of the boat.

DOLORES
Beautiful, isn't it?
(Selena nods)
You used to be beautiful too, Selena. Why ain't you anymore?

SELENA turns back. DOLORES waiting for her.

DOLORES
It's drugs, ain't it? And don't give me that look like I don't know what I'm talkin about.

SELENA
That's crazy...

DOLORES
There's nothing crazy about it. You've changed -- you're twelve-years -old and you're smokin pot and I want to know where you're gettin it from and how long it's been goin on.

SELENA
There's nothing "going on," okay?
(backing off)
<u>Nothing</u>.

DOLORES
Whatever trouble you're in won't change my love for you, Selena, but I can't begin helpin you out of it until you tell me the truth.

SELENA
I don't do drugs, mother.

DOLORES
Then what is it? Are you pregnant?

SELENA
Oh, get real...

DOLORES
You've let one a these pimple-faced Jonesport squirts go too far, ain't you? You gone too far and now you're pregnant.

SELENA
You're crazy.

DOLORES
You want to end up just like me? You want to be dumb and stuck and cleanin up after people your whole life? Is that what you want?

SELENA
I'm not pregnant.

SELENA turns away now. Leaning against the railing.

DOLORES
Then what is it, Selena? What the hell's going on with you?

SELENA
Leave me alone!

DOLORES
No I won't -- we're gonna ride this damn ferry back and forth till you tell me what's got you this way!

DOLORES moving to hold her -- SELENA pulls away -- stumbling free -- landing against the rail so hard she almost goes over -- DOLORES grabbing her sweater and pulling her back --

SELENA
...just leave me be -- let me go! -- let me go! -- let me go!

DOLORES releases her. Standing there -- SELENA suddenly distracted because --

A NECKLACE has fallen to the deck -- the chain broken --

SELENA ashen as DOLORES gets to it first --

DOLORES
What're you doing with...
(staring at Selena)
This is your grandmother's cameo.
(shocked)
What'd you do? Did you go in your father's closet?

SELENA holding herself. Silent. DOLORES suddenly gripped by the fear of a terrible thought.

DOLORES
Omigod...

CUT TO

A BUREAU DRAWER. Whipping open. Sweaters there. HANDS searching quickly -- something buried in here -- a SAVINGS ACCOUNT PASSBOOK pulled from deep within.

DOLORES in her bedroom. Alone. Holding the passbook.

CUT TO

THE COASTAL NORTHERN BANK. Jonesport. Day.

CUT TO

INSIDE THE BANK. DOLORES at the teller's window, watching her TELLER confer with THE HEAD TELLER in the BG.

TELLER
(returning with the passbook)
I'm afraid you'll have to discuss your daughter's savings account with Mr. Pease.

DOLORES staring. Confused.

CUT TO

MR. PEASE, 40, a tidy, small-town banker, behind his desk. A glass partitioned office. The bank floor beyond. PEASE offers an account file for DOLORES' inspection.

PEASE
As you can see, Mrs. St. George, this account's been closed out by your husband and--

DOLORES
How can that be?
(ashen)
That's my life savings.
(passbook in hand)
How can that be, when I got the savings book right here?

PEASE
Well, you see, Mrs. St. George, that is -- was -- what we call a "custodial savings account." That means the child in whose name the account is held can -- could -- draw from it with either you or your husband to countersign --

DOLORES
But these don't show any goddamn withdrawals! How'd he get the money without the goddam passbook?

Heads starting to turn around the bank.

PEASE
Mrs. St. George, if I could ask you to keep your voice down --

DOLORES
I'll worry about my voice. You worry about the way this beshitted bank does business, chummy!

PEASE
(safety in paper)
According to this, your husband stated the passbook was lost. He asked to be issued a new one. It's common enough--

DOLORES
Common be damned! I opened this account! Who the hell you think put that money in the bank to begin with?

PEASE
(all eyes on them now)
Please, Mrs. St. George. I'm sorry, but I assure you that what we did was not only legal, but standard bank practice.

DOLORES
Maybe it's legal and maybe it ain't. What I can't believe is that "standard bank practice" means you don't make a single goddam phone call to the person whose name and number's right up top on the account!

PEASE
I'm very sorry, but--

DOLORES
You say you're sorry one more time, I'll kick your butt up so high you'll look like a hunchback.

PEASE sits back. DOLORES struggling to keep it together.

DOLORES
It's cause I'm a woman, ain't it? If it'd been the other way around, if I'd been the one passin off a fairy story how I'd lost the passbook and ast for a new one, if I'd been the one who started drawin out what took eleven years to put in, wouldn't you have called Joe?

Silence. PEASE squirming. DOLORES goes quiet.

DOLORES
I spose it's one a two things: either he buried in a Mason jar in the back-yard or else he opened a new account. Which is it?

MR. PEASE
Mrs. St. George, I can't possibly... What you're asking, it's privileged information, the confidentiality of our customers is--

DOLORES
I know you don't have to tell me, but I'm hopin you'll think for just one moment about the grief and heartache you'd a saved me by makin one phone
(MORE)

DOLORES (cont)
call. I'm askin please to tell me whether he's opened a new account here, or if I've got to start diggin holes around my house.

An agonizing pause. PEASE glancing around the bank.

MR. PEASE
(sotto)
You look like you could use a cup of coffee. Perhaps I could meet you -- say, half an hour?

DOLORES sits back. Starts breathing, as we --

CUT TO

THE CHATTY BUOY. A luncheonette. DOLORES waiting at a back booth. MR. PEASE making his way toward her. He's nervous about being seen. Slipping quickly into the seat.

MR. PEASE
It's still in the bank. Most of it anyway. Twenty-five hundred. That's the good part. The bad part is that the new account is in his name only.

DOLORES
Accourse it is. He sure didn't give me no new passbook to sign. That woulda tipped me off right there.

MR. PEASE
Most women wouldn't know one way or the other. Many women sign anything their husbands put in front of them.

DOLORES
Well, I ain't many women.

MR. PEASE
I've noticed.
(he means this)
Good luck, Mrs. St. George.

CUT TO

DOLORES'S ROUGH HANDS polishing ELEGANT SILVER.

VERA (OS)
As soon as the luncheon silver is clean, I want the guest rooms aired out --

THE DONOVAN DINING ROOM. Day. DOLORES, looking haggard and distracted, working with TWO OTHER MAIDS at the table. FINE CHINA and SILVER SERVICE spread before them.

VERA
(pacing around them)
I'll want to go over the linens for the daybeds in the study and the sun room...

CUT TO

THE DONOVAN MAIN STAIRWAY. DOLORES, looking beat, carries a stack of linens upstairs.

VERA
(behind her)
Must you look so trod upon, Dolores? In thirty-six hours you will have the uniquely thrilling experience of standing at the epicenter of a total solar eclipse!
(pause)
My God, I've got guests travelling eight hundred miles for something all you need do is look out the window.

DOLORES can't fake it. She's whipped.

CUT TO

VERA'S BEDROOM. DOLORES changing the sheets. Struggling to keep her emotions in check, as VERA busies around --

VERA
When the caterers arrive, I want you to make sure they have everything they need. I've made a list -- I want no last minute frantic runs to Jonesport. Do you hear me?

DOLORES does not hear her. DOLORES is breaking. It's no use. The tears are coming and coming fast. She sits on the bed and starts bawling. A wracking sob, muffled as she pulls her apron up over her face.

VERA staring at her. And then she moves for the door.

VERA
(calling down the hall)
Pamela! Could you put on some tea!

VERA closes the door. Moves to a chair across. Picks up her needlepoint. Begins to work.

DOLORES finally lowers the apron -- eyes raw, sniffling --

VERA
Are we quite finished?

DOLORES
I'm sorry, Mrs. Donovan. I truly am.

VERA
Vera.
(Dolores stares)
I insist that all women who have hysterics on my bed call me by my Christian name thenceforward.
(she pauses, sewing away)
I'm hoping you're not going to tell me you've been careless enough to let that mean-spirited creature you live with knock you up again.

DOLORES
No ma'am.

VERA
So enlighten me, Dolores. What turns a stone-hard woman like yourself into the blubbering mess I see before me?

DOLORES
(mopping up)
Joe stole my money. I went to close out my account -- money I been savin for Selena -- three thousand dollars. I went to get it out and it's gone.

VERA
Planning on playing the stock market, were you?

DOLORES
I was gonna leave. Joe's out on a boat till at least tomorrow. I was gonna take Selena with me tonight
(MORE)

DOLORES
before he gets back. I was gonna leave n use that three thousand to get us set-up someplace as far away from here as possible.

VERA
Well, isn't that dramatic.
(pause)
Don't look to me, Dolores, all my money's tied up in cash.

DOLORES still trying to get it together.

VERA
And why exactly are we running away?
(no response)
Go on, Dolores. Nothing's as bad as it seems.

DOLORES
Really?
(beat)
I'd say this might just ruin that notion once and for all. I'd say...
(tears winning now)
I'd say this...it might be just as friggin bad as it seems...

CUT TO

THE DECK OF THE FERRY. DOLORES and SELENA as we left them at the start of this sequence -- SELENA (13) has just been pulled back from the railing. DOLORES, holding THE BROOCH in her hand, gripped by the fear of a terrible thought.

DOLORES
Omigod. It's your father, ain't it?

SELENA blanches.

DOLORES
(the idea building)
He's been at you, hasn't he?

SELENA
What are you talking about?

DOLORES
Omigod...

SELENA
(wildly)
That's crazy...

DOLORES
(gutshot)
Oh, Selena...what's he done to you?

SELENA
(panicked now)
Nothing! -- that's just -- that's -- what you're saying -- it's --

DOLORES
(over her)
He's been touching you, hasn't he?

SELENA
No! -- no -- no -- no...!

DOLORES trying to hold her, when SELENA slaps her hard across the face --

CLOSE-UP -- DOLORES'S SHOCKED FACE --

SELENA (VO)
You crazy old woman!
(her adult voice coming in out of nowhere, whipping us--)

OUT OF FLASHBACK AND

SELENA jumping up from the table. DOLORES just stunned.

SELENA
You crazy old lying bitch!

SELENA backing away -- every bit as freaked out as she was on the ferry -- total panicked denial --

SELENA
You'll say anything, to get out of it, won't you?

DOLORES
Selena, no... How can you --

SELENA
-- does this shit just come to you, or do you actually work on it? --

DOLORES
(blown back)
-- no, Selena -- I'm only asking you to remember --

SELENA
-- I remember you hitting him!
That I remember! --

DOLORES
-- not talking about somethin doesn't
make it go away --

SELENA
-- I remember the blood coming down
his face! I remember the drinking!
I remember the fighting! But sex?
(backing away)
That detective -- he's right -- you
are dangerous!

DOLORES
(desperate)
Selena, no --

SELENA turns quickly -- into an end table -- a LAMP falls -- CRASHING to the floor -- the room suddenly that much darker.

DOLORES
Selena, you've got to believe me.

SELENA
No I don't!

SELENA, hysterical, backing for the stairs.

SELENA
I should never have come back!
Never! I knew it the whole fucking
time!

SELENA bolts up the stairs. DOLORES standing there as her door SLAMS SHUT. And then silence.

CUT TO

SELENA in her room. Frantic. Pushing the bureau against the door. Scanning THE PILLS -- a panicked search for the right bottle. Finding it -- tearing it open -- throwing down a Seconal -- then another. There's only one more left and -- fuck it -- she takes that too.

CUT TO

DOLORES at the bottom of the stairs. Crushed. Moving heavily back through the living room and --

INTO

THE KITCHEN. DOLORES just about to start putting things away, when she hears SELENA coming back down the stairs.

DOLORES
(turning back)
Selena?

SELENA (12) standing at the bottom of the stairs. Dressed to go out. A backpack.

SELENA
Don't try and stop me...

WE ARE IN FLASHBACK

We're still in the living room, but it's a bright, Spring afternoon in 1975.

DOLORES (36) Standing near the kitchen. Bare feet.

SELENA
(backing for the door)
Mrs. Devereaux called, she needs extra help with the hotel because of people coming for the eclipse. I'm going to stay over a few days.

DOLORES
Selena, we talked about this--

SELENA
I don't care what we talked about!
(rushing out the door--)
I don't want to be here when you talk to dad about your crazy ideas!

DOLORES rushing to follow. Not as fast in bare feet. Through the front door and --

OUT INTO

The yard. DOLORES running off the porch -- heading across the field -- trying to cut SELENA off --

DOLORES
(yelling as she goes--)
Selena! Selenaaaa...!

SELENA already way ahead -- almost beyond earshot -- SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE SKY as she runs along the road to town and --

DOLORES running -- trying to chase -- tough without shoes --

DOLORES
Selena!!!
(stopping as--)

Suddenly -- DOLORES stumbles -- A CRACKING SOUND -- something giving way -- boards breaking -- DOLORES falling -- catching herself -- GASPING -- grabbing at the ground as her legs disappear beneath her -- and then scrambling back up -- standing slowly and staring down at --

A DRY WELL -- covered with rotting boards -- grown over with weeds and scrub -- a black hole there in the middle of nothing and --

MATCH CUT -- OUT OF FLASHBACK TO

THE ROUND KITCHEN TABLE. Cluttered with Selena's laptop, tape recorder, notebooks, etc...

DOLORES picks up her glass. Finishes the last of the Scotch. Begins gathering up Selena's things, as we --

CUT TO

THE LIVING ROOM. The next day. Daylight through the windows.

SELENA coming downstairs. Suitcase in hand. One foot in front of the other. Stopping as she sees DOLORES at the table. A wary silence.

DOLORES
For twelve hours sleep you don't look so good.

SELENA
What time is it?

DOLORES
It's close to one.

SELENA
Is there a three o'clock ferry on Sundays?

DOLORES
Three-o-five.

A pause. DOLORES stands.

SELENA
I need to be in L.A.

DOLORES
(moving off)
There's coffee.

SELENA
Did you hear me?

DOLORES
I packed your things.
(she turns back)
You had stuff lying around. It's on the couch.

SELENA, hands shaking, finds a cigarette.

DOLORES
You'll want some coffee.

SELENA standing there as DOLORES pads out of the room.

CUT TO

THE PORCH. Later. SELENA comes out of the house. Bags under her arms. It's cold, but she wears only a jacket. Starting down the steps -- she stops --

AN ENVELOPE -- legal sized. Left there.

SELENA lowers the bags. Opens the envelope.

DOLORES
(on the porch now)
What is it?

SELENA
It's Detective Mackey's report.
(she offers it)
Here.

DOLORES
I don't want it.

SELENA
You don't want it.
(beat)
That's great. I'm terribly, impressed.

DOLORES
Just leave it there.

SELENA
How remarkably brave, mother.

DOLORES has nothing to say. SELENA shoulders her bags. Report in hand, she strides to her car.

SELENA
(opening the trunk)
Since you seem unwilling to help yourself, I'm going to do it for you.
(all busines now, dumping the bag in the trunk)
I'll speak to my secretary tonight. You'll have your phone turned on tomorrow.
(shutting the trunk)
I'll take the report. I'm going to fax it to a lawyer. You can expect a call tomorrow.
(she comes around the car, stops at the door)
And when you talk to the lawyer, mother, you damn well better do what they tell you.

DOLORES
You're gonna miss the ferry.

SELENA
You want to hang yourself? Go into that inquest tomorrow and start shooting your mouth off.

DOLORES
Don't you fret about me. I'll pull through like taffy.

SELENA
Don't give me that homespun bullshit!

Silence. DOLORES not about to say another word.

SELENA
I'm sorry mother...
(she gets into the car)
Sometimes being a bitch is the only thing a woman has to hand onto.

The door closes. Engine starts. In gear and --

DOLORES watching the car pull away. And then gone.

CUT TO

LITTLE TALL receding in the distance.

SELENA staring back from the deck of the ferry. A dead run, almost no one on board. She's cold, under-dressed.

CUT TO

THE SHORE. A CAR pulling up. MACKEY gets out. Eyes to the ferry as it pulls away.

SELENA on deck. Staring back. Contact and --

CUT TO

SELENA on deck. Breaking the look. Turning away, rushing for the cabin, as we --

CUT TO

THE FERRY SNACK BAR. Just inside the door. Windows to the deck. This place hasn't changed in thirty years. An old, sullen COUNTERMAN pouring coffee. No business.

SELENA at the counter as he delivers.

COUNTERMAN
One coffee. One dollar.

SELENA pays up. She lifts the cup. Staring at it.

INSERT -- THE CUP -- another throwback.

"LITTLE TALL, ISLAND OF ENCHANTMENT"

HOLDING ON THE CUP -- in the BG, TWO MORE CUPS pushed forward on the counter, as we hear --

COUNTERMAN (OS)
Okay...one coffee, one hot cocoa, that'll be, sixty cents --

MAN'S VOICE
There you go...

SELENA turns to see --

JOE (38) dropping his coins on the counter. Picking up the two cups. Heading out and --

SELENA staring. Simply immobilized, as --

JOE leaves the snack bar, Through the door and out onto the deck.

SELENA watching through the window as --

JOE carries the cups out across the deck.

SELENA leaves the counter. Out the door and --

ONTO

THE DECK. SELENA in pursuit. Following him to the rear of the boat. No passengers out here because it's cold. And then she slows -- nothing could prepare her for what she sees now --

YOUNG SELENA (12) waiting on a bench. JOE handing her the cocoa. The ferry's wake foaming behind them,

JOE
Your hands're cold.

SELENA
I'm okay.

JOE
Here. C'mon -- gimme your hands...

The girl hesitates. Scared. Powerless.

ADULT SELENA walking toward them, shaken to her core.

JOE taking YOUNG SELENA'S hands in his. He glances around and then, sure they're alone, he pulls her hands down beneath his coat into his crotch.

SELENA
(trying to pull away)
It's okay. I'm fine. I am.

JOE
No one's gonna see -- just...

SELENA
My cocoa...it'll spill...

JOE
I'll buy you another one.
(guiding her hand into his lap--)
That's it...just like that.

SELENA's eyes dart about the deck. Terrified to be seen and yet terrified to be alone with him.

ADULT SELENA shattered. Desperate for the memory to end and powerless to stop it. And there's no need to cut back and forth any longer, because the THREE OF THEM are all there simultaneously now.

JOE breathing more quickly now. Aroused. Adjusting his coat to cover his crotch. YOUNG SELENA near tears as she fumbles with him.

JOE
No -- you're...
(adjusting his body)
Do it like I showed you -- nobody's gonna see us -- go on...

SELENA nods. Bearing down, when suddenly --

THE COUNTERMAN'S VOICE
(from behind us)
You want your change or what?

ADULT SELENA whips around.

THE COUNTERMAN standing there. Pissed off to be out in the cold. Four dollars in hand.

SELENA
...I...I don't care...
(rushing past him)
...you keep it...

SELENA striding away. Away from him. Away from the bench. Away from it all. Anywhere but here, as we --

CUT TO

THE RENTAL CAR whipping through rain into a parking space. A SMALL TOWN at night. SELENA jumping out of the car -- into the rain -- running across the street and --

A PUDDLE -- deeper than it looks -- up to her ankle in it -- almost falling -- feet soaked --

ACROSS THE STREET

A PHARMACY. Closing time. A DRUGGIST just now pulling down the metal security gates. Looking up, as SELENA comes hobbling toward him -- ducking in under the awning --

SELENA
Thank God, you're still open...
(pulling out a prescription--)
I drove like crazy -- they told me in Machias, you were open late.

The DRUGGIST is a nice guy. It's raining and she's obviously desperate. He takes the script -- looks at it.

DRUGGIST
(he can't help her)
Oh, I'm sorry, Miss, but Seconal...

SELENA
What do you mean?
(undone)
It's a perfectly good prescription. I've got -- if it's ID you want --
(her bag)
-- it's not a problem -- I've--

DRUGGIST
It's from New York.

SELENA stops. Coming unglued. It's not going to happen.

DRUGGIST
It's a controlled substance. We can't fill it from out-of-state.

SELENA
Well... Isn't there...
(broken)
What am I supposed to do?

DRUGGIST
There's a motel just down the way. Maybe get some sleep -- I'll see what I can do tomorrow.

SELENA
If I could sleep I wouldn't need fucking prescription, would I?

The DRUGGIST shocked. Staring, as SELENA backs away, into the rain, and we --

CUT TO

SELENA'S SUITCASE. Open on the back seat of THE RENTAL CAR. SELENA digging through it. We're in front of the PHARMACY. She's already taken off the wet shoes and is now searching for...

SLIP-ON SNEAKERS. Finding one. Putting it on with one hand while she digs for the other. There it is. It catches on her foot -- she stops -- a CASSETTE TAPE stuffed inside -- a piece of paper wrapped around it.

SELENA, confused, pulls on the second shoe. She pops the tape into the car stereo. Hits "play," to hear --

DOLORES'S VOICE
I hope I'm doin this right, cause I've never worked one a these before. Gorry, but don't these Japanese make the cunningest little gadgets --
(stopping abruptly as--)

SELENA shuts it off. Quickly starts the car. Pulls out.

CUT TO

THE RENTAL CAR speeding along through the rain.

CUT TO

INSIDE THE CAR. SELENA simply wired. Windshield wipers beating. Cigarette going. Highway whipping past. Every few moments she glances at the tape deck. Will she listen or not? Finally, suddenly, impulsively, she hits the button and --

FLASHBACK

THE EAST END COASTLINE. The rocks near the house. Dawn. Twelve hours earlier. DOLORES huddled over the TAPE RECORDER. Surf pounding below her.

DOLORES
...You're sleepin now, Selena, but I know when you get up you're gonna leave. By the time you hear this, I figure you're in California and by now it's all been said and done...
(continuing as we--)

CUT TO

SELENA driving. Tape still rolling --

DOLORES'S VOICE
...cause I'm through with keepin secrets anymore. You can forget about the lawyer cause I'm gonna go talk to those people tomorrow and I ain't makin a stink about it no more. I'm telling you now what I'm gonna tell them. I just thought you oughta hear it firsthand is all...
(fading into VOICE OVER as we --)

FLASHBACK

VERA'S BEDROOM. The Summer of 1975. VERA sitting in her chair, needlepoint in her lap.

DOLORES (VO)
I was sittin there, like I tried to tell you, in Vera's room, just weepin away, and...

DOLORES on the bed. Mopping up tears. Bereft.

DOLORES
She says it ain't never happened. But she screamed n cried n denied it so bad I know it's true... I shoulda...the way she's been actin around him...I shoulda known it sooner...but my God...

VERA
How far has he gone, Dolores?

DOLORES
(not listening)
...he's always favored her...past couple years...hanging on her... puttin her on his lap...ridin her around when he couldn't be bothered for anyone else...

DOLORES starting to cry again.

DOLORES
He wa'nt always like this...
(trying to believe)
We started out -- it wa'nt a dream come true, but...

VERA
Has he fucked her?

DOLORES
I don't know!
(through the tears)
I don't know. But if he hasn't, he's plannin on gettin to it soon enough...he's working the boats... coming home...he'll be back tomorrow and I...
(beat)
Maybe I'm wrong...

VERA
What if you're right?

DOLORES looks up.

VERA
Husbands die everyday, Dolores. Why, one is probably dying right now while you're sitting here weeping.
(knit one, purl two)
They die and leave their wives their money. I should know, shouldn't I? Sometimes they're driving home from their mistress's apartment and their brakes suddenly fail.
(a steely smile)
An accident, Dolores, can be an unhappy woman's best friend.

DOLORES staring, as we --

CUT TO

FRONT PORCH. Night. DOLORES alone in the dark. Staring out over the water. FISHING BOATS dotted across the horizon. DOLORES just sitting. Thinking.

CUT TO

DONOVAN HOUSE LAWN. Cloudy skies. Buffet brunch. White linen and good silver. FORTY GUESTS, a Bloody Mary crowd. CATERERS and WAITERS scrambling to keep up. VERA, holding a paper bag, wafting through the assembled. Heading --

ONTO

THE PATIO. DOLORES hauling away a garbage can.

VERA
Dolores. Dolores Claiborne!

DOLORES
We're goin as fast as we can.

VERA
Please. Everything's charming.

DOLORES
I'm sorry the day's so gray.

VERA
Oh, we'll have our eclipse. Sunshine by three. You'll see.
(cheerful as can be)
I'm sending you home, Dolores. You've done a wonderful job and it's all under control and I want you to go and share this remarkable experience with your husband.
(Dolores confused)
He <u>will</u> be back, won't he?

DOLORES
I spose so.

VERA
I've got you two eclipse viewers and two reflector boxes.
(the bag)
I thought you and Joe might like them.

VERA offers the bag. DOLORES just staring at it.

VERA
Sometimes, Dolores, sometimes you have to be a high-riding bitch to survive. Sometimes being a bitch is all a woman has to hang onto.

DOLORES takes the bag. A look between them. Volumes unspoken.

VERA
Now go on home. Pam and Sheila can clean up tomorrow.
(brightly)
Remember -- sunshine by three!

DOLORES
Thank you, Vera.

CUT TO

LITTLE TALL VILLAGE. Day. Still cloudy. Busy preparations for the big event. Stores closing up. People on roofs. Daytrippers loading onto fishing boats.

CUT TO

THE FRONT PORCH. Day. JOE sitting there. Sunburned and dirty from the boat. The sky is gray and overcast.

JOE
What the hell're you doin back?

DOLORES
(coming from the car)
Vera gave me the afternoon off. Welcome home to you too.

JOE
Where's Selena?

DOLORES
She's workin at the hotel.

She hands him a paper bag. He opens it.

JOE
Johnny Walker Red? What's this?

DOLORES
It's a present to celebrate the eclipse.
(he's suspicious)
I've been feelin so good n relieved I just thought I'd share some of my happiness.

JOE
What've you got to feel happy about? Somebody invent a pill to cure ugly?

DOLORES
You don't want it, I c'n always pour it down the sink.

JOE
Fat chance.
(pulling it away)
What the hell is going on here?

DOLORES
I don't want to fight with you, Joe, specially not today. I've got some nice salami n Swiss cheese and water biscuits.

JOE
Just make me a sandwich.

DOLORES
Fine. A sandwich for you, hors d'oeuvres for me. Then we'll have a couple drinks n watch the eclipse. Mrs. Donovan sent down a viewer and reflector thingamajig for each of us.

JOE
Shit, you think I give a fuck about anything that rich bitch gave you?

DOLORES heads into the house. JOE already pulling out his penknife to break the seal on the Johnny Walker.

CUT TO

THE KITCHEN. Later. DOLORES preparing lunch. The sound of BOAT HORNS bleeding in from the distance.

JOE (OS)
Lookit em! Whole goddam island's out there!

DOLORES moves to the window and --

HER POV

DOZENS OF BOATS dotted along the coastline. Party time. The sky still gray, but even now, two hours before the big event, the light seems odd and ominous.

CUT TO

JOE alone on the porch. Glass in hand.

JOE
Ain't nothin gonna happen that's any more'n a thunderhead going acrost the sun, and they're all just about shootin off their pants.
(he drinks)
I hope it rains. I hope it comes down s'hard it drowns em all!

CUT TO

DOLORES in the kitchen. Looking back from the window.

CUT TO

THE PORCH. Later. Lunch is finished. JOE working hard on the Scotch. That strange sky beginning to brighten.

DOLORES
(clearing the food)
Vera said it'd be sunshine by three. She might just be right.

DOLORES bending down to take his plate. JOE, without warning, puts his hand to the back of her neck and pulls her toward him. A kiss. DOLORES hesitates -- stiff for a moment -- and then it's over.

JOE
Wa'ant half bad, was it Dolores?

DOLORES
Been a long while since <u>that</u> happened.
(really thrown by this)
I guess we're both fulla surprises.

JOE's hand slipping up inside her skirt.

JOE
Maybe you n me, Dee, maybe we can get up to the dickens later on. What do you think about that?

DOLORES
Maybe so. I'm gonna -- I got the dishes...
(extracting his hand)
Why don't you see what you can make of those viewers.

JOE
(back to the bottle)
Goddam <u>eclipse</u> -- I've seen dark before. Happens every goddamn night.

DOLORES standing behind him. JOE spits off the porch.

CUT TO

THE KITCHEN. DOLORES standing there, watching the water just run. Horns of a dilemma. Steeling herself.

OUT THE WINDOW

THE SKY. An odd cast to it. The clouds have burned away. A strange, thin, rose tint starting to develop. HORNS on the boats starting to echo more frequently on the wind.

JOE (OS)
Well, here we go.
(calling in)
Ain't this what you n all the rest of the fools've been waitin for?

CUT TO

THE PORCH. DOLORES coming out of the house. JOE fumbling with the reflector, drunkenly trying to figure it out.

JOE
(he's tanked)
Goddamn. She's disappearin all right.

DOLORES
Joe. It's time for the surprise.

JOE
What surprise? What in God's name're you talkin about, woman?

DOLORES
You know the money in Selena's bank account?

JOE
What about it?

DOLORES
You took it.

He lowers the reflector. He smiles. Then he looks at her and starts LAUGHING...

JOE
(cackling away)
Well, don't you look sour.

DOLORES
I guess that's pretty funny, ain't it?

JOE
I guess it is.

DOLORES
A real knee-slapper, huh?

JOE
Don't you worry your pointy little head about it. That money's just about fine.

DOLORES
Do I look worried?

JOE
(enjoying this no end)
Fooled you right and proper, didn't I, Dee?

DOLORES
You fooled me about a lotta things, Joe, but I guess I finally caught up with you.
(he's not laughing anymore)
You already spent five hundred of it. What'd it go for, Joe? Poker? Beer?

JOE
There you go, selling me short...

DOLORES
That was set aside for school, but I guess you figure you blown all our money you might as well run through her's while you're at it.

JOE
School, shit... You can't even wipe your ass for three grand these days. I'm gonna triple that money.
(drunken pride)
I'm buyin into a boat. Fedder's boat. He's selling me a share.

DOLORES
Ain't that just perfect. That damn tub spends more time in the yard than on the water.

JOE
It'd just kill you to support me wouldn't it, Dee?

DOLORES
I spent the day with the people at the bank. Turns out you weren't s'posed to do that -- lie to 'em, make 'em break their rules.

JOE
What the hell'd you go n do?

DOLORES
I got that money given right back to me in cash. All but the five hundred you pissed away --

JOE standing so fast the reflector CRASHES to the ground --

DOLORES
-- so you can just go fuck yourself! That is, if you can get that old limp noodle a yours to stand up.

He's on her -- fast -- hand to her throat -- her chair falling back -- she's gasping for air as --

JOE
I told you what'd happen if you didn't leave off bein fresh with me! I told you a million times!
(bearing down)
You believe me now? Do you?

DOLORES
(barely)
...yes...yes, Joe...

He throws her down. Hard -- down the steps and into the yard. She lands on her knees. She's staggered, looking around trying to get her bearings --

DOLORES
(eyes casting above)
...my God, lookit that... Stars.

THE SKY -- She's right. Stars twinkling against an ethereal purple background. A strange, accelerated sunset. The sun being swallowed by a huge, black, full-moon.

JOE
You'll see plenty of em, woman, you don't quit stallin.
(beat)
So where the hell's that money now? And believe you me, there better be every last cent of it!

DOLORES
I buried it...
(her voice hoarse)
...out in...by the field...

DOLORES standing. Backing away, across the driveway.

JOE
Shit. Ain't that just like a woman. Well, why don't we just go out and get it back where it belongs.

DOLORES
You better save the big talk for your pals at the barber shop.

She's easing away now. Widening the gap between them.

DOLORES
Although I wonder if they're gonna think you're such a stud when they find out the only ass you can get your hands on belongs to your twelve-year-old daughter!

JOE blindsided -- too drunk to shift gears that fast.

JOE
What're you...?
(weakly)
I don't know what you're talkin about.

DOLORES
Really? Then how come you look like the devil just reached in and grabbed them little raisins you call balls?

JOE
She's a liar!
(guilty wild)
She's a little goddam liar and a tease! I'm gonna get my belt -- I am -- I'm gonna get my belt and--

DOLORES
How could you do it, Joe?

He stalls out. Crippled. Confirmation in his silence.

JOE
I'm gonna get my belt...

DOLORES
There's only one thing you're gonna get, Joe...

DOLORES starting to run now --

DOLORES
...n that's a long stretch in Shawshank prison for child molestin!

JOE
You goddam bitch...

Suddenly, it's a chase -- DOLORES out front -- ten yards ahead -- sprinting off the driveway and into the field -- JOE gaining ground -- stumbling in the darkness -- but even drunk he's faster than she is --

JOE
Think you can get away from me!

DOLORES cutting through the scrub -- the brambles -- and it's so dark -- and she trips -- falling forward and --

JOE diving -- grabbing a handful of dress and --

DOLORES scrambling free -- her dress tearing and --

JOE
-- you goddamn fuckin bitch --
(stumbling ahead and--)

DOLORES running full out -- unconscious -- fear, pain, anger...none of it matters now -- running and running, and then, suddenly, everything she's got left explodes into a single effort -- she's jumping -- feet leaving the ground -- through the air -- landing hard in the shrubs and --

JOE (OS)
(from behind her)
-- you're mine now, Dolores --

DOLORES on her ass, turning --

JOE closing fast -- murder in his eyes --

JOE
-- and bitch're you gonna get your payback n--
(not finishing because--)

Suddenly, this terribly familiar CRACKING SOUND and --

WOODEN BOARDS, half rotten, breaking beneath his feet and --

JOE drunk and startled -- starting to drop -- the ground giving way below him and --

JOE
-- nooooooo....!

He's grabbing wildly -- coming up with nothing but air, and --

DOLORES standing -- forcing herself to look -- freezing in terror as she sees --

JOE'S FACE hanging there at the cap of the well. Hands bleeding, clutching desperately at the rotten boards --

JOE
Oh Christ, Dolores...
(he's scared)
It's the old well -- help me out --
quick -- 'fore I fall all the way in.

DOLORES standing there, not moving a muscle and --

JOE hanging there -- terrified -- and now this horrible look of comprehension coming over him --

JOE
Oh, you bitch...
(fear into panic)
Oh you goddamn bitch...

He starts to clawing at the boards -- fingernails tearing against wood -- legs flailing below him, trying to find a grip -- snorting and wincing as he strains to pull himself out and then --

DOLORES. As she hears THE BOARDS GIVE WAY. As she listens to JOE'S SCREAM echoing down into the well. As she hears the dull, echoing thud of his body landing somewhere below. As she holds herself -- trying to get it together -- her eyes drifting above and --

THE SKY. Total eclipse. A thin wafer of brilliant light exploding from behind the moon's silhouette. Spectacular and clear. An exact moment. Beyond description.

DOLORES looking away before she's blinded. Standing there, totally wiped-out, when --

JOE'S VOICE
(from the bottom of the well--)
Duh-lorrrr-isss...

She freezes. Oh God. Not that...

JOE'S VOICE
...help me, Duh-lorrrr-issss...help me pleeease...

She can't take it. Backing away...stumbling...running and --

CUT TO

DARKNESS. At first, just SOUNDS -- HANDS rifling a work-table...STUFF FALLING...panicked BREATHING --

DOLORES
-- omigod -- what've I done? --

Suddenly, the sharp beam of a powerful FLASHLIGHT swinging around -- We're in THE TOOL SHED. DOLORES wielding the light.

CUT TO

THE ECLIPSE. Hanging there like a bullseye. The moon just passing totality. But there's something strange about this angle. And now, a second shadow passes over the sun. DOLORES'S SHADOW -- she's standing somehow above us. And then, light -- the flashlight beam -- in our eyes. And now we realize we're looking up from deep inside THE WELL: a tunnel of moss-covered stones rising above us.

The FLASHLIGHT scouring the darkness...

And we hear BREATHING...

And then, A HAND, bloody and trembling, rises INTO FRAME. Fingers clawing for a handhold...

A SECOND HAND, strains above the first...

JOE'S FACE into the light. Moss and blood and dirt dripping down over a demonic grin. He's climbing! Already halfway to the top --

JOE
...take more'n that to kill me Dolores...

DOLORES staring down in horror -- holding the flashlight -- paralyzed with fear and --

JOE
(rock by claw)
...take mor'n that to get outta what I got in mind for you...

DOLORES drops to her knees at the edge of the well. Black sky. Stars. JOE getting closer...

JOE
...you sorry fuckin bitch...

DOLORES can't look -- she turns --

THE FIVE-YEAR-OLD SELENA coming toward her across the field. Exempted from the eclipse somehow. Her own light. Smiling.

SELENA
(childish sing-song)
...five - ten - fifteen - twenty...
five - ten - fifteen - twenty...
(she will continue,
as she approaches--)

DOLORES just completely undone. Staring at the GIRL, as --

JOE keeps climbing -- almost to the top --

JOE
...I'm comin, Dee...n when I do,
you're gonna wish you'd never...
(every inch an effort)
...you're gonna wish you'd never
set eyes on me...

DOLORES frozen and --

FIVE-YEAR-OLD SELENA getting closer and --

SELENA
...five - ten - fifteen - twenty...
(over and over and--)

JOE'S HAND struggling for a piece of wood at the top and --

JOE
...cause I'm gonna kill you, Dee...
n' I'm gonna make it hurt...
(continuing and--)

DOLORES immobilized -- back and forth between them --

SELENA
(still coming)
...twenty - five - ten - fifteen...

JOE
...I'm gonna kill you slow, Dee...
n then I'm gonna have my payback
with that little mouthy bitch...

DOLORES can't move -- can't run -- can't think, and --

JOE clawing at the wood -- grotesque -- pain -- fury -- fear -- all of it at once and --

JOE
...cause it's just gonna be me n her from here on in...nobody stickin their nose in our business...

SELENA
...ten - fifteen - twenty - five...

JOE willing himself up -- another ten seconds and he's gonna make it and --

DOLORES looking down at him and --

FIVE-YEAR-OLD SELENA coming closer and closer and --

JOE'S FACE there at the top -- a grin in there somewhere behind the blood and swelling and --

A LARGE STONE rising in the air and --

JOE'S FACE, that nightmare expression changing for just an instant into fear --

JOE
...you biiitttch...you goddam fuckin biiiittcchhhhh--

DOLORES smashes the STONE down across his nose with every ounce of energy she's got and --

HE'S FALLING -- backwards -- no chance to scream -- his head cracking against the wall -- plummeting now -- beyond the light, to a dull muddy thud far below.

DOLORES turns and --

The girl is gone -- no more Selena -- just the empty field beginning to brighten as the sun fights it's way back and --

DOLORES standing now. Staring back over the field. As the light begins to return. As the sounds of the party boats and the birds begin to bleed back in. She looks down the well --

JOE'S BODY at the bottom. Bent and broken. He's dead.

OUT OF FLASHBACK TO

THE PRESENT

SELENA at the wheel of the RENTAL CAR. Going way too fast. Oncoming headlights. Windshield wipers beating. She is simply shattered. Too much to process, as she hears --

DOLORES'S VOICE
(from the tape deck)
...I burned my dress, dropped the whisky bottle out near the well and started askin folks if they'd seen Joe off on a bender anywhere. Other than Detective Mackey showin up n makin trouble, it was easier'n I thought.
(beat)
That's what happened, plain n true n I don't care no more who knows it...

SELENA speeding up -- as we --

FLASHBACK

CLOSE-UP -- DOLORES and the tape recorder --

DOLORES
...lyin ain't done me much good all these years. It ain't done me any good n it surely ain't helped you like I was hopin...

THE PRESENT

CLOSE-UP -- SELENA crying as she drives --

DOLORES'S VOICE
...So it's time to spill the beans n be done with it...

FLASHBACK

CLOSE-UP -- DOLORES with the tape recorder.

DOLORES
I'm sorry Selena. I'm sorry n that's the best I can say. I'm sor--
(stopping abruptly, as we cut to--)

THE PRESENT

CHAOS -- SELENA one hand on the wheel, the other BANGING the shit out of the cassette player -- RADIO on suddenly -- TOO LOUD -- and then a CAR HORN BLARES from outside and --

HEADLIGHTS from an oncoming car and --

CUT TO

THE CAR -- losing control of the car -- brakes locking up -- skidding in the rain -- spinning -- lights and --leaving the road -- fishtailing -- forward -- around -- and then, as fast as it started, it's over. The CAR in a ditch. Angled oddly, but no major damage.

CUT TO

INSIDE THE CAR. SELENA in shock. Wipers going as the rain beats down. WHITE NOISE coming from the tape deck. SELENA, trembling, looks around. And then she simply comes apart. Completely overwhelmed, as we --

CUT TO

A MAGISTRATE. A crusty, old up-country circuit official seated at a folding table. Warming up his hands.

MAGISTRATE
Okay, I guess I'm about half-thawed out from the ferry.
(papers before him)
Just so everybody's on the same page here -- this is not a trial....

A MEETING ROOM. We're in the basement of the Little Tall Town Hall. A large open space, this the room for Cub Scout banquets and Town meetings. Linoleum. Fluorescent lights. Seated in folding chairs, around the MAGISTRATE are:

DOLORES in her best dress.

A STENOGRAPHER, a woman of 30.

FRANK STAMSHAW in uniform.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY VOLES is 35. Ambition in a suit and tie. Mainlining coffee. Poring over Mackey's report.

MACKEY beside him. Confident and prepared.

MAGISTRATE
...This is a preliminary inquest required by law in all cases of death so deemed by the Medical Examiner's office, State of Maine, Third Circuit, Washington County, as "suspicious in nature."
(he turns to Dolores)
Miss Claiborne, they tell me you you've waived your right to counsel at this time. Is that correct?

CUT TO

SELENA entering in the back of the room. Slipping in quietly. Out of sight, in the shadows. She looks like hell. Not enough pills in the world. Listening as we go --

BACK TO

MAGISTRATE
It's up to you Miss Claiborne, but I can tell you, I've married people who brought lawyers with em.

DOLORES
No, sir. Thank you, Your Honor.

MAGISTRATE
Well, there's no need to be nice to me. Mr. Voles over there, he's the one you want to be polite with. He's come all the way here from the State District Attorney's office and he's the one who's gonna decide should he bring a case before the Grand Jury....
(continuing as--)

VOLES is still huddled over the report. He'll keep flipping pages, speed-reading. MACKEY, beside him, trying to contain his impatience, as we hear --

MAGISTRATE (OS)
He's gonna ask you some questions. At any point should you wish to either not answer, remove yourself from questioning, or reschedule this inquest until such time as you do have an attorney, it shall be so granted. We're clear on that?

DOLORES
(resigned)
Ayhuh.

MAGISTRATE
Mr. Voles...

VOLES
This report...
(looking up)
Detective Mackey obviously put in a long weekend.
(where to begin?)
I wasn't expecting thirty pages...

MACKEY
(jumping the gun)
Your Honor, in the interest of brevity, perhaps I might be able to walk us all quickly through the case.

VOLES staring at MACKEY. Just a hint of friction here.

VOLES
If it'll make things easier...

MAGISTRATE
What about you, Miss Claiborne? You mind Mr. Mackey asking you the questions?

DOLORES
I spose not.

CUT TO

SELENA. Still in the shadows. Paralyzed.

BACK TO

MACKEY
Samuel Marchant, Miss Claiborne. The mailman. He told us he came upon you holding a marble rolling pin, in what looked to him to be a, "posture of attack," over the body of Vera Donovan. Is that true?

DOLORES
Yes it is.
(to the Magistrate)
I <u>was</u> goin to kill her, Your Honor. She tried to do it herself but she was still alive. She asked me to put her out of her misery. I didn't know if I could do it 'r not. By the time I got back from the kitchen, she was dead.

MACKEY
Just your good luck, I guess.
(beat)
Cause, we've got several witnesses who say they were present when you threatened the life of Vera Donovan. Is that true?

DOLORES
Course it's true.
(beat)
What the hell you need witnesses for? I told you myself on Saturday.
(to the Magistrate)
Hell, over the years, I told her I'd dump her out the window, leave her in the coal closet, run her down in the Chrysler... You name it.

MACKEY
What about throwing her down the stairs? Was that in your repertoire?

DOLORES
You askin if I did it, or said it?
(enough already)
Hell, why don't you just say what's on your mind.

MACKEY
Well, it's all right here...
(hoisting the report)
It's pretty simple, Miss Claiborne. Vera Donovan was a wealthy woman. You were the sole beneficiary of her estate. You threw her down the stairs because you knew there was one-million six-hundred-thousand dollars waiting at the bottom.

All eyes on DOLORES. She says nothing.

MACKEY
But it's not the first time this has happened, is it, Miss Claiborne? People have a tendency to take some bad falls when you're around, don't they?

DOLORES staring at MACKEY. You sonofabitch.

VOLES staring at MACKEY. Where the hell is he going?

MACKEY
You know what, Miss Claiborne, I doubt I'm the only who feels that way...
(he turns to the back of the room)
Maybe you'd like to join us, Miss St. George?

SWING TO

THE BACK DOOR. SELENA standing in the shadows. Trapped.

MACKEY
This is Miss Claiborne's daughter, Your Honor...

SELENA hesitates. All eyes peering back at her. The door right behind her. So much easier to just walk.

MAGISTRATE
What the hell's going on here?

MACKEY
Why don't you come on up, Selena?
(he pulls a chair for her--)
No need to stay back there.

SELENA can't get her feet to move. DOLORES just stunned.

VOLES with no clue what's happening, turns to MACKEY --

VOLES
(whispering)
John? What the hell're you doing?

MACKEY
It's an election year, kid. I'm getting you two murders for the price of one.

SELENA still standing there.

MAGISTRATE
Miss...if you could...
(impatient)
Either join us or leave the room.

SELENA will approach the bench. She will <u>not</u> look at her mother. A copy of the REPORT gripped tensely in her hand.

MACKEY holding the chair, but she won't sit down.

MACKEY
I see you've got the report.
You have a chance to look it over?

SELENA lost. Not sure what to say.

MACKEY
So what do you think?

SELENA
Of the report?

MACKEY
Yes.

SELENA
I think it's...
(weakly)
I guess it's pretty impressive.

MACKEY
Ring any bells for you?

SELENA can't find her tongue. About to break.

MAGISTRATE
(concerned for her)
Why don't you have a seat, Miss?
(before this gets
out of hand--)
Mr. Voles, maybe you'd like to--

MACKEY
(over him)
Your honor, if I might -- just for
a moment -- if we could let Miss
St. George amplify a little...

MAGISTRATE
Detective Mackey...

MACKEY
The report. You said it was
"impressive."

SELENA
Yes...
(broken)
...yes it's impressive.

MACKEY
Maybe we should finish what we
started seventeen years ago...
(gently here)
What do you think, Selena? Maybe
that's the best for all of us.
Maybe it's time for the truth.

SELENA focuses. MACKEY can taste it.

SELENA
The truth is my mother didn't kill Vera Donovan.

MACKEY stiffens. Pressure drop.

MACKEY
I see. So you're sure about that.

SELENA
Yes.

MACKEY pulling it together. Wheels turning fast.

MACKEY
And your conclusion, it's based on what?

SELENA
It's based on the fact that I know my mother.

MACKEY
Of course...
(a sly, triumphant smile--)
Mothers and daughters. What was I thinking?
(almost amused)
Here we've come all this way -- Mr. Voles...The Magistrate...all of us getting up early, running around in the cold, and all I had to do was ask you in the beginning. And this...
(the report)
Hell, we might as well just tear the damn thing up.

SELENA
(to the Magistrate)
There's nothing in that report that says she did it.
(deeply felt)
These two women loved each other.

MACKEY
Now <u>that's</u> something I'd like to hear about. That's something I definitely missed in my investigation. Going around, talking to people, taking statements -- and somehow that fact just slipped past me.

MACKEY focuses on SELENA now. In his sights.

MACKEY
Why don't you fill us in on that, Miss St. George. How were they together? From your observations.
(no response)
Let's start with the last time you saw them together.
(silence)
When you'd visit -- Christmas, birthdays...holidays -- How'd they seem to get along?

SELENA lost. A deer in the headlights.

MACKEY
I mean, as you said, you know your mother. So let's hear it.
(sadistic beat)
When was your last visit?

SELENA
(finally)
Fifteen years ago.

MACKEY
Well. You must have some memory.
(to the Magistrate)
Your Honor, I was in the room -- Miss Claiborne didn't even recognize her daughter.
(turning to--)
Constable Stamshaw, you were there with me, is that true, or not?

FRANK nods. Sadly. Almost reluctant.

STENOGRAPHER
Your Honor...

MAGISTRATE
Constable, for the record, could you please speak up?

FRANK
No, sir. Miss Claiborne didn't recognize her daughter.

SELENA looks to DOLORES for the first time -- I'm sorry. They're fucked and they know it. Their first collaborative moment since this story began and it's a plane wreck.

MACKEY
I don't have much more, Your Honor.
(cruising now)
The report is fairly detailed. I can recommend without reservation that this matter move to the Grand Jury.

MAGISTRATE
Mr. Voles, anything you want to get at here?

VOLES may not be happy with the way it's gone down, but he's heard enough. And he's about to say so, when --

SELENA
They did love each other.
(heads turn)
They did and I can prove it.

MACKEY
Maybe you ought to quit while you're ahead.

SELENA
Vera Donovan was sick and tired of living. She tried to kill herself and she failed. The only thing my mother's guilty of is thinking about trying to help her finish the job. And there's nothing in this report -- not one blood sample or "angle of inclination," or any of it that says any different.
(to Voles)
This report -- all of it -- it's worthless without a motive.

MACKEY
Well then, I rest my case.

SELENA
He says they hated each other.

MACKEY
We've got witnesses.

SELENA turns sharply to DOLORES --

SELENA
How long did you work for Vera?
(quick, mother)
How long?

DOLORES
Twenty-two years. Ten full-time.

SELENA
And what did she pay you?

DOLORES
Eighty dollars a week.

SELENA
Twenty-four hours a day? Seven days a week?
(Dolores nods)
Were there other, better-paying jobs you could've taken during that time?

DOLORES
Sure.

MACKEY
Is there a point here, Your Honor?

SELENA
These two women -- neither one of them could hold their tongue -- my God, they bitched and squabbled for years. No one's denying that. The question is why do they stay together? If they hated each other so much, why go through twenty years of hell?
(to Dolores)
Why mother?

DOLORES thrown. Not sure what to say.

SELENA
We know I never visited. Who did?
(beat)
In the past ten years, who else has been in that house?

DOLORES
Dr. Cullen came once a month.

SELENA turns back to the men. Building now.

SELENA
Why did they stay together?
(beat)
Because there was nobody else in the world who gave a damn whether they lived or died.
(finding it slowly)
I mean...really...is that what you do when you hate someone? Clean up their mess? Trade off your life at, I don't know, what is it --
(MORE)

SELENA (cont)
fifty cents an hour? -- just to keep them going?
(welling-up)
They were all they had. And you don't think that's love?

MACKEY
That's all very touching, but what about the million-six?

SELENA
My mother never cared about money!

MACKEY
We're not talking about money. We're talking about a lot of money.
(it's laughable)
One-million-six hundred thousand dollars? Hell, you could buy this whole damn island and everyone on it.

SELENA
She never knew about the will.

MACKEY
Come on, Miss St. George...
(loving this)
The will is eight years old!
(no response)
You want us to believe they were best friends and alone for eight years and they never talked about it?

SELENA doesn't flinch. That's his best shot and she's not folding. Not now.

SELENA
Well then....I tell you what, Detective, somebody better go run for the S.W.A.T. Team -- somebody better lock down this building and get out the handcuffs, because we may be in the presence of one of the great criminal minds of the century!

The room is silent. SELENA hot now --

SELENA
I mean, think of it. For eight years she's a heartbeat away from being the richest woman on the island.

DOLORES frozen. Just like the rest of them.

SELENA
How many bedpans a day, Mother?
(no answer)
How many bedpans in eight years?
Two a day?
(no answer)
Two a day?

DOLORES nods. Too stunned to answer.

SELENA
That's what? Let's be conservative, let's say, what? -- Five-thousand?
(sounds right)
Five thousand bedpans...throw in, I don't know -- say two-thousand sponge baths. God knows how many wet sheets and feedings and diapers and bed sores...

SELENA reaches over and takes DOLORES'S HANDS -- offering them to the room --

SELENA
These hands -- every day -- all that work -- every minute of it, just one choke hold away from a million dollars.
(she gives Dolores back her hands--)
Talk about a brilliant plan. She waits eight years and what does she do? Does she drug her victim? Smother Vera gently in her sleep? Let her drown in the tub? Starve her slowly?

MACKEY
We know what she did.

SELENA
But that's your theory isn't it? She waited eight years to throw her down the front stairs?

MACKEY
Yes. To look like an accident.

SELENA
An accident?
(it's war now)
She ransacked the kitchen to get a rolling pin! How is beating Vera to death going to look like an accident?

MACKEY staring at her. The smell of doubt in the room.

SELENA
But that's your theory, right?

MACKEY
I've seen all kinds of murders.
(backpedaling)
There's always an element of impulse.

SELENA
Oh, so it's an impulse and a plan.

MACKEY
That is not what I said.

SELENA
And she knew about the will but she waited eight years.

MACKEY
She thought she'd get away with it.

SELENA
And why is that?

MACKEY
Because she'd done it before!

Silence. SELENA quiet and in control. VOLES listening.

SELENA
Mr. Voles, the only motive in this room worth talking about belongs to Detective Mackey --

MACKEY
-- wait a minute --

SELENA
-- Detective Mackey is under the delusion that my mother murdered my father twenty years ago --

MAGISTRATE
-- okay, let's just --

SELENA
-- he couldn't put a case together back then, so he's trying it now --

MACKEY
-- that's got nothing to do with it --

SELENA
-- he's been waiting for twenty years to get at her --

MAGISTRATE
-- I want order in this room --

SELENA
(grabbing the report)
-- that's why we've got the Warren Commission here --

BANG! - BANG! - BANG! - BANG! -- The MAGISTRATE'S hand beating against the table.

Silence. SELENA turns to MR. VOLES. Like a rock.

SELENA
My mother and I are leaving now. We're leaving and you can do whatever it is you want. But you better know, if you try and turn this man's obsession into a murder charge, I've got a long list of New York lawyers who'd just love to take this case apart in front of a jury.

SELENA turns to DOLORES.

SELENA
Get up, Mother.

MACKEY
Wait a minute...

SELENA
Get up, Mother.

DOLORES stands. Not sure if she's allowed to or not.

MACKEY
You're not going anywhere.

SELENA takes DOLORES'S ARM --

SELENA
Don't worry, mother, he can't hurt you anymore.

They will begin to move slowly toward the door --

MACKEY
(to the Magistrate)
You're not gonna let them just walk, are you?

The MAGISTRATE looks to VOLES for guidance and --

MACKEY
Your honor...

DOLORES and SELENA heading for the door -- as if at any moment the bubble will burst and --

MACKEY turning to see VOLES closing up shop --

MACKEY
What the hell're you doing?

VOLES
(gathering papers)
If I hurry, I can make it back to Bangor by lunch.

MACKEY
I've got the report!

VOLES
Come on, John. You don't have shit.

DOLORES and SELENA at the door and --

MACKEY, apoplectic, staring at VOLES --

VOLES
Look, I'm doing you a favor.
(it's a wrap)
Like you said, it's an election year.
(he closes his briefcase)
I don't need to lose this case and neither do you.

MACKEY standing there. Stricken, as we --

CUT TO

OUTSIDE THE HEARING ROOM. DOLORES and SELENA as the door closes behind them.

DOLORES
(in awe)
Selena...you were so...you were just...
(she stops because--)

SELENA looks ready to pass out. Spent down to the bottom. She left it all in the courtroom. DOLORES rushing to hoist her up, as we --

CUT TO

THE LITTLE TALL PIER. Day. SELENA, suitcase at her feet, finishing a smoke. DOLORES watching the FERRY load up.

SELENA
You still need a lawyer.

DOLORES, surprised, looks over.

SELENA
A tax attorney. You're rich now.

DOLORES
Don't you fret on that. You just go out to California and get started on that book.

SELENA
There is no book. No L.A.
(she turns back)
I don't have to go. It was lie.
(no self pity here)
The guy I work for -- it's pretty come apart all the way around.

DOLORES
So where'll you go?

SELENA
New York, I guess. I don't know.

DOLORES
Well, you're not stayin here.

SELENA surprised by this.

DOLORES
First time I sent you away, I was lyin to myself. I thought if could just get you outta here -- away from me n this place n everything that happened -- I thought you'd be fine. I lied to you n I lied to myself n I won't ever do it again.
(strong and plain)
This time's different. Now I know I'm doin the right thing. You can do anything you want, Selena, cause there's nothing any scarier than what you already been through.

SELENA feeling it. Letting it in.

DOLORES
I've done nothin for thirty years but worry about you. But right now, after what I saw today, I know I don't ever have t'worry anymore.

SELENA comes to DOLORES with open arms. They embrace. And it's real. And it's more than they can say out loud. The FERRY HORN BLOWS -- all aboard.

DOLORES
Go on now....
(breaking it off)
You go on.

SELENA pulls away. Taking strength from DOLORES. Finding her suitcase. Backing away slowly for the ferry.

DOLORES watching her go. Just standing there watching, as the FERRY HORN BLOWS AGAIN, and we --

PULL AWAY and --

FADE OUT

THE END